



## INSTITUTE FOR DEFENSE ANALYSES

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Throughout history, great powers have sought to police and settle the affairs of less mature lands; a process some now call nation building. Major General Jonathan Bailey, recently retired, draws on his encyclopedic knowledge of history and his experience as a British officer in Rhodesia, the Falklands, Northern Ireland, and the Balkans, to help inform nation-building endeavors of the twenty-first century.

He examines three historical case studies: Britain's Indian Empire, Sierra Leone before and after independence, and NATO's intervention in Kosovo. Although radically different, each offers lessons for contemporary nation-building.

In the case of British India, an entire subcontinent was ruled by a British civil service that numbered in the thousands rather than tens of thousands. Members of Britain's civil service brought with them a full set of Western preconceptions, but they also brought a unique sense of commitment and cultural sensitivity. Through their labors, the nettlesome subcontinent they ruled for more than two centuries became the world's largest democracy and a contemporary power in its own right.

British experience in Sierra Leone was less successful: Its tenure was shorter, the institutions it built were more fragile, and its influence less enduring. After independence, Sierra Leone's infrastructure, education system, civil trust in government, and economy eroded and finally collapsed amid deepening corruption and eventual civil war. Here, Western influence failed to take hold. By 1998, the United Nations declared Sierra Leone the worst place in the world to live.

Multi-national attempts at peace-keeping and nation-building have encountered similar problems. NATO's intervention in Kosovo, motivated by a righteous desire to block ethnic cleansing, ushered in new problems caused by those the intervention sought to protect. Deeply rooted corruption, ethnic and religious hostility, and economic disarray make NATO's military presence little more than a temporary mask for Kosovo's problems.

General Bailey's paper offers contemporary policymakers a sobering perspective on the challenges of establishing and sustaining societal order in foreign lands. By offering insight into what has worked and what has failed, he illuminates the bounds of what is possible today.

Comments and questions are invited and should be directed to: Maj Gen J.B.A. Bailey, MBE, Ivy Cottage, Lower Rd, Bratton, Westbury, Wiltshire, BA134RQ, UK; [jbab@btinternet.com](mailto:jbab@btinternet.com)

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Joint  
Advanced  
Warfighting  
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## **Contemporary Operations: Reflections on and of Empire**

Major General Jonathan B. A. Bailey, CB, MBE, PhD  
British Army (Retired)

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## Preface

This paper was prepared under the task “Improving Capabilities for Irregular Warfare (including Security, Stability, and Reconstruction Operations, and Transition)” for the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Advanced Systems and Concepts.

In keeping with the subtask objective of engaging coalition partners to benefit from their perspectives on Irregular Warfare lessons and needs, the Joint Advanced Warfighting Program (JAWP) asked Jonathan Bailey to share his perspectives on the British experience in Irregular Warfare. The result was this paper, which looks back at the British Raj on the Indian subcontinent, examines Britain’s more recent experiences in Sierra Leone and Kosovo, and draws on those case studies to offer themes and dilemmas for those engaged in nation-building today.

Major General Jonathan B. A. Bailey, CB, MBE, PhD, retired from the British Army in 2005. His last active duty assignment was as Director General Development and Doctrine, where his responsibilities included analyzing the lessons learned from recent and historical operations and applying them to concepts, doctrine, structures, and equipment of the British Army. General Bailey is now a consultant to the Leverhulme Programme on the Changing Character of War at Oxford University, and a consultant to the JAWP.

JAWP was established at the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA) to serve as a catalyst for stimulating innovation and breakthrough change. It is co-sponsored by the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics; the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy; the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; and the Commander, United States Joint Forces Command. The JAWP includes military personnel on joint assignments from each Service and civilian specialists from IDA. The JAWP is located in Alexandria, Virginia, and includes an office in Norfolk, Virginia, to facilitate coordination with Joint Forces Command.

This paper does not necessarily reflect the views of IDA or the sponsors of JAWP. Our intent is to stimulate ideas, discussion, and, ultimately, the discovery and innovation that must fuel successful transformation.

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# I. Introduction

The year 1897 was the high point of the British Empire, hardly evident to most who witnessed Queen Victoria's grand Diamond Jubilee celebration and who surely expected yet greater things; but it was clear to some that the great drama, which had opened as "provincial repertory" and little promise in 1607, had now but a few acts left to run. For many, however, Elgar's commemorative composition, *Recessional*, struck an inappropriate and pessimistic note.<sup>1</sup> [Editor's note: This work of Elgar's is also known as *Pomp and Circumstance*, and was played at the coronation of King Edward VII. It became associated with graduations in 1905, when Elgar received an honorary doctorate from Yale University, though it was played as a recessional rather than the now-popular processional.]

The Empire had become a great enterprise of national fulfillment for the British, an essential part of their identity; at the same time, one bent on projecting that identity not just onto, but systemically into others. Its idealistic objective jostled with others of material interest, but its end had become in large measure to make "them" somehow like "us," by ways of military campaigns and the gigantic economic, political, social, and even moral reordering that conquest and control would facilitate.<sup>2</sup>

The means to further this great project would be found from the wealth of an already well-developed global trading empire, now boosted by the burgeoning, newly industrialized British economy. This wealth would merely "prime the pump" when necessary, for so grand a project could only be sustained if it were self-financing, as order brought material progress in an increasingly global economy.

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- 1 The military high point was undoubtedly 2 September 1898, the Battle of Omdurman, when General Kitchener defeated a massive Dervish army with minimal loss. Yet less than two years later, British imperial power would be humbled by Boer farmers, and imperial self-confidence would never be the same. Elgar's sentiment had not been wide of the mark. The knock-out blow to the "sway" of Empire would be the fall of Singapore in 1942.
  - 2 The dilemma about how far to go in trying to make "them" like "us" was at the heart of the debate about the role of the US Peace Corps in the 1960s—a great non-military nation-building venture. Fischer (1998).

The “script” of Britain’s imperial drama had not started with such ambition or high moral tone, rather the empire had been merely one of settlement and trade. By its closing acts, however, it was its noble purpose that with hindsight was seen to justify or redeem the whole enterprise. The path had been followed in mysterious ways and now that great purpose had at last been revealed—at least in the minds of those who liked that idea.

When these arguments seemed to lose their force, the ways to lack effect, and the means to be too costly, the lights dimmed, the audiences booed, and the curtain soon came down. New shows came to town staged by self-confident American and Soviet impresarios.

For the recipients of British imperial nation-building and the multitude of military actions that this entailed, the “noble purpose” no doubt seemed rather different, just as it may today to those who experience regime change, peace-keeping, Stability and Support Operations (SASO<sup>3</sup>), and nation-building at the hands of the West, either at their own request or at the instigation of insistent “benefactors.” Should the West fail today, other impresarios wait ready to stage their own shows offering novelty, sensation, emotional extravagance, and other visions to capture global audiences. How long will the “story” and the production offered by the West retain its appeal?

Britain’s imperial experience presents the West today with a distant mirror for its new-found idealism and conviction which demand interventionism and SASO, along with comprehensive nation-building operations. The principal actor is now the United States, not Britain, although the idea that the US might be furthering some quasi-imperial agenda has often been anathema to its own self-perception, and such denials can make understanding the dynamics harder to grasp. Such denials nevertheless highlight even more starkly the dilemmas that face democratic empires, and the paradoxes implicit in using benevolent force to change the way others behave and think, which also afflicted the British in their less apologetic imperial heyday.

The very creation of the United States was perhaps the greatest nation-building operation of all time, but this was just a part of an even bigger global phenomenon, the British Empire, of which the early history of the US was itself a part. This study looks at the attitudes of Britain and the US to imperialism, intervention, and nation-building at

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3 SASO is a modern American military term that will also be used when referring to analogous British operations from history.

the end of the 19th century, the high point of the British Empire. It then focuses on that empire's most important element, India. The creation and the conduct of the British Raj was arguably the greatest nation-building venture by one nation of another in the history of mankind. [Editor's note: The British Raj refers to the British rule during 1858–1947 of the Indian Subcontinent, (present-day India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Myanmar) during the period when these lands were under UK colonial rule as part of the British Empire.] It may also turn out to have been the most successful, a triumph celebrated indirectly by the US's growing perception of India as the partner of the West, symbolized by President Bush's visit in March 2006. This analysis will look at what motivated the builders of the Raj, how they achieved so much, the results, and in centennial perspective what, if anything, of enduring instruction may be gleaned from that experience.

Having assessed the lessons that may be learned from the Raj, this study then analyses one of Britain's more modest, recent nation-building ventures; but one whose essence also spans the centuries and which provides further insights into the way modern strategic and military agendas echo those of a previous age. It surveys the founding of Sierra Leone in the 1780s, rooted in another age of idealism and moral self-confidence led by the Abolitionist movement; and it follows the path that led to the British operations which continued there unilaterally in the new millennium. It identifies some constant factors in motive, methods, pitfalls, and consequences, in operations that today are a reflection of Britain's own perception of what is transferable across history from its imperial past—operations in which Britain still feels, rightly or wrongly, that history has given it some kind of intuitive comparative advantage.

Armed forces may reflect the people of their nation, but the operations they conduct are perhaps an even better guide to the people's temper and character; many Britons would choose to see operations in Sierra Leone as such a revealing, and in this case flattering, guide. When applied to other theaters, however, this construction may be less clear and appealing.

Finally, this study will look at a recent multi-national intervention, SASO and nation-building operation, in Kosovo in 1999, surveying its complexity and lessons, how problems were tackled and with what success. Not least it will dwell upon the difficulty of learning lessons, even when they may be readily available and have been bought at great cost. It will ponder how to do things better and what the prerequisites might be for success in future operations of this nature.

The intellectual keystone for operations in Kosovo in 1999 was put in place in 1998, or arguably even 1992. The year 1998 may well, with hindsight, be seen to be the high point of an idealistic enterprise, analogous to that of the Raj as it seemed in 1897, or rather it will be if that new enterprise fails. A new *Recessional* may be required. If it succeeds, 1998 may be seen as the year in which a new era in international affairs was defined and took off.

Western nations now pay ever greater attention to counter-insurgency (COIN), SASO, nation-building, related operations, and the inter-agency links that may optimize them. This study will not attempt some snappy transfer of lessons from 1897 to recent and on-going operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, but rather will make generic points to contemplate when considering the broader options for the future. The differences between Britain's Raj and current circumstances are obvious, but so too are some analogies, and many of the issues resonate today even if specific motives, behavior, and appearances differ. The balance between future success and failure will depend much upon how well lessons reflected from such distant mirrors are understood and learned. Relevant insights abound, to be recognized and adapted with judgment as may serve future circumstances, or as Thucydides would have it, "...the events which happened in the past and which (human nature being what it is) will, at some time or other in much the same ways, be repeated in the future."<sup>4</sup>

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4 Thucydides (1965), pp. 5–6.

## II. International Context: Britain and the United States

Much of what may be said of Britain's imperial outlook in 1897 may also be said of the US's, for that year marked perhaps an even greater watershed in US international relations, with the Far East about to become its far west. A.T. Mahan and Theodore Roosevelt caught the spirit of the age with unabashed "imperial" bravura.

By 1897, the US's great imperial continental conquest, settlement and assimilation was virtually complete, with the expulsion of four European empires and the defeat of several native ones. The frontier may have closed, but Manifest Destiny had become habit-forming and was not yet assuaged. Its Monroe Doctrine was about to spread across the Pacific to meet that of Japan, with the eventual consequences so astutely forecast in 1904 by the Commandant of the U.S. Army War College, Tasker Bliss.<sup>5</sup>

Theories to explain and justify these developments were similar to those underwriting the British Empire. Theodore Parker, a New England clergyman and friend of R.W. Emerson, noted an imperial paradox maintaining that, "The history of the Anglo-Saxon for the last three hundred years has been one of aggression, invasion and extermination. God often makes the folly and sin of men contribute to the progress of mankind."<sup>6</sup>

In 1885, the American clergyman Josiah Strong had noted that "The mighty Anglo-Saxon race" was on the march and "ruled more than one third of the earth's surface." Its advance would result in "The extinction of the inferior races" through the force of "vitality and civilization."<sup>7</sup> "Can anyone doubt that the result of this competition will be the 'survival of the fittest'?"<sup>8</sup> In 1891, Strong noted how "Anglo-Saxons" had multiplied six-

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5 "There is no doubt that this will result in due time in the formulation of a second line of foreign policy; we shall then have one policy based on contact with, and another policy based on isolation from, the rest of the world. We may yet find ourselves fighting for our Monroe Doctrine on one side of the world, and fighting somebody else's Monroe Doctrine on the other side of the world. However, that time has not yet come." It came in 1941. Gole (2003), p. 21.

6 Quoted in Stephanson (1996), p. 54.

7 Stephanson (1996), p. 80.

8 Strong (1891), p. 3.

fold, to 120 million in 90 years, and had taken possession of one third of the globe. He expected them to dominate the world when their numbers reached one billion. This would only come after a great clash of civilizations, for as the American frontier reached the Pacific, pressure of population would mean that the US would be bound to compete for dominion elsewhere, thanks to “The mighty centrifugal tendency in this stock... strengthened in the United States.”<sup>9</sup>

The US’s “leap across the Pacific,” to intervene in 1893 and subsequently to annex Hawaii,<sup>10</sup> and to take the Philippines in 1898, seemed to confirm Strong’s theory. “Inferior races” could not be saved except by pliant assimilation, but more profoundly, “What if it should be God’s plan to people the world with better and finer material?”<sup>11</sup>

J.E. Chamberlain, the British Colonial Secretary, described the world as it seemed to him which, as a matter of observed fact, was dominated by the “Anglo-Saxons.” “Is the world the inheritance of the Anglo-Saxon? There are signs that the Anglo-Saxon at least thinks so, and that the rest of the world is not disposed to actively dispute his claim.”<sup>12</sup> He saw the history of England over the previous 300 years as the history of territorial acquisition, a dynamic pursued energetically by the United States, “...the history of the acquisitions of England over again...Extending its dominions by purchase, by conquest, and by intrigue, the United States Anglo-Saxonizes as it advances. Its facility of assimilation it has indeed derived from England, but it has improved on the original...America has already Anglo-Saxonized California, Louisiana and Texas, and will some day Anglo-Saxonize Mexico”<sup>13</sup>—a forecast now in some doubt.

The American, John Fiske believed that the retreat of “barbarism” in the face of superior races and civilization was inevitable, and that by the year 2000, North America would have a white population of 600 million, while Africa would have followed Amer-

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9 Strong (1891), p. 1. A couplet inscribed in a rock at Plymouth, Massachusetts heralded the US drive westwards, “The Eastern nations sink, their glory ends, And empire rises where the sun descends.”

10 In 1896, only 7,200 white Americans lived in Hawaii out of a total population of 109,000—24,000 of whom were Japanese. Many Japanese felt that Hawaii should belong to them rather than to the US, a view shared by Togo Heihachiro when he visited the islands as a naval officer in 1898.

11 Strong (1891), p. 3.

12 Chamberlain (1877), p. 788.

13 Chamberlain (1877), p. 788.

ica and become a mighty nation of English descent—the hubris of assumed predetermined superiority.<sup>14</sup>

Chamberlain predicted that, “The whole continent of Africa from the delta of the Nile to the Cape of Good Hope, and from Babel Mandeb to Sierra Leone, is destined to fall into British hands at a time not too far distant.” This was not an obviously wayward speculation at the time. He predicted that within 50 years, North America, Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Polynesia, and the British Isles would be British possessions. “It will present, in short, almost a monopoly of the undeveloped resources of the globe.”<sup>15</sup> He did not envisage a reunified British nation, but an Anglo-Saxon political, commercial, and defensive league with a rotating imperial capital between London, Washington DC, and Melbourne.<sup>16</sup> That said, “The United States is destined to be the chief seat and breeding ground of the race for many generations to come.”<sup>17</sup>

His assertion was not based on a racial theory *per se*, but rather one which held that the US could absorb all-comers without losing the characteristics Chamberlain described as “Anglo-Saxon”: a love of order, energy, industry, political freedoms, and commercial association. The racial term was already coming to have a cultural rather than genetic meaning and would soon be replaced by the “West.” The apparent importance of racial singularity was waning, in part thanks to Herbert Spencer<sup>18</sup> who had maintained that the mixing of races had beneficial genetic effects such that, “The Americans may reasonably

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14 Clarke (1995), p. 81.

15 Chamberlain (1877), p. 788.

16 Rudyard Kipling later wrote of a time when the world would be at peace ruled by an international Aerial Board of Control using Anglo-Saxon air power to preserve global order and harmony. Hallion (2003), p. 298. Kipling’s *As Easy as A.B.C.* of 1912.

17 Chamberlain (1877), p. 788.

18 Herbert Spencer coined the phrase, “survival of the fittest” in his *Social Statistics* of 1851, maintaining that evolution and acquired characteristics produced progress, not merely diversity. In *The Principles of Biology* of 1864, Spencer explained that his “survival of the fittest” was the same as Darwin’s “natural selection.” Darwin acknowledged the merit of Spencer’s term, using it himself in the sixth edition of *The Origin of the Species*. This cast the debate in a new light, for if nations could also “acquire characteristics,” then competition was “natural,” dominance and extinction were not predetermined, and the competitive outcomes had a moral validity. Social competition was added to biological selection, laying the foundation for Social Darwinism. Henning (2000), pp. 15–16. Over 500,000 copies of Spencer’s work were sold in the US, where they helped to explain, justify, and demand westward expansion—its “Manifest Destiny.”



look forward to a time when they will have produced a civilization grander than any the world has known.”<sup>19</sup>

The US had conducted numerous small wars of conquest and SASO in North America, although qualms about describing them thus can be as particular as Britain’s insistence that operations in Northern Ireland in recent decades should be termed “Internal Security.” These operations had much in common with those of other expanding “European” empires around the world.<sup>20</sup>

Theodore Roosevelt described the American campaign in the Philippines as the triumph of civilization over “The Black chaos of savagery and barbarism,”<sup>21</sup> a judgment in keeping with his world view on race, power, and civilization.<sup>22</sup> He saw the necessity for “inferior races” to be replaced by their betters. It was “...of incalculable importance that America, Australia and Siberia should pass out of the hands of their red, black and yellow aboriginal owners and become the heritage of the dominant world races.”<sup>23</sup> He was not concerned whether this territory was won by treaty or by war, so long as it was won, for this would benefit mankind and civilization. He believed that, “It was our manifest destiny to swallow up the lands of all adjoining nations who were too weak to withstand us.”<sup>24</sup>

Theodore Roosevelt did not subscribe to the “warped, perverse and silly morality which would forbid a course of conquest that has turned whole continents into the seats of mighty and flourishing civilized nations. All men of sane and wholesome thought must dismiss with impatient contempt the plea that these continents should be reserved for the use of scattered savage tribes, whose life was but a few degrees less meaningless,

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19 Quoted in Strong (1891), p. 2.

20 The conquest of Apacheria, for example, was comparable in many respects to the campaign against the Herero in South West Africa by the Germans, operations in Chechnya by the Russians and against numerous tribes by the British, for example on the Northwest Frontier of India. The conquest of Apacheria was the more successful thanks primarily to the demographic tide which ensured that the native people would not form a future majority. The American experience was broadened beyond North America by a sharp and controversial campaign in the Philippines which still offers valuable insights into COIN. See Cocker (1998) for a comparative study of the conquests of South-West Africa and Apacheria, and Miller (1982) and Linn (2005) for insights on the Philippines.

21 Dower (1986), p. 151. Miller (1982), p. 251.

22 Roosevelt also subscribed to the view of Gustave LeBon that each race had a “soul” and character of its own. Dyer (1980), p. 11.

23 Roosevelt (1995), p. 63.

24 Roosevelt (1995), p. 62.

squalid, and ferocious than that of the wild beasts with whom they held joint ownership...Most fortunately the hard, energetic, practical men who do the rough pioneer work of civilization...are not prone to false sentimentality.”<sup>25</sup> The search for pioneers to conquer new frontiers and build nations was repeated 60 years later by Sargent Shriver in the creation of the Peace Corps.<sup>26</sup>

The American “frontier” continued its advance into Asia in the name of trade and civilization. John Burgess, the founder of Political Science at Columbia University, maintained that people who were incapable of civilizing themselves had a duty to submit to those who would civilize them. The US had a “transcendent right and duty to establish political and legal order everywhere...a great world duty” to eradicate “permanent instability on the part of any state or semi-state.”<sup>27</sup>

Mahan asserted the right of people to be governed under their own arrangements, but it should not be assumed that this meant that oppressive regimes represented the interests of those they ruled. Regimes should therefore be overthrown in the interests of their people. “There need be no tenderness in dealing with them as institutions.”<sup>28</sup> “That rude and imperfect, but not ignoble arbiter, force...which ...still secures the greatest triumphs of good” would have to be applied.<sup>29</sup> After all, “Force has been the instrument by which ideas have lifted the European world to the plane on which it now is, and it still supports our political systems, national and international, as well as our social organization.”<sup>30</sup> In keeping with this, in 1898 Elihu Root maintained that, “The American soldier is different from all other soldiers of all other countries since the world began...he is the advance guard of liberty and justice, of law and order, and of peace and happiness.”<sup>31</sup>

In 1898, the US sought a lease on Samsah Bay in Fukien. That same year it bought Spain’s interest in the Philippines for \$20 million, with the stated desire to “uplift, civilise

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25 Roosevelt (1995), p. 62. He added, “I have even scantier patience with those who make a pretence of humanitarianism to hide and cover their timidity, and who cant about “liberty” and “the consent of the governed.” Roosevelt (1995), p. 188.

26 “...the rugged Americans needed for this pioneer job...” would build, grow crops and educate. Quoted in Fischer (1998), p. 19.

27 Quoted in Stephanson, p. 84.

28 Mahan (2003), p. 104.

29 Mahan (2003), p. 18.

30 Mahan (2003), p. 115.

31 Quoted in Bacevich (2002), p. 167.

and Christianise them.” Others had a more practical view. The permanent chairman of the Republican Convention, Henry Cabot Lodge wrote in *The New York Times*, “We make no hypocritical pretence of being interested in the Philippines solely on account of others...We believe in trade expansion...and the greatest of all markets is China. Our trade there is growing by leaps and bounds. Manila, the prize of war, gives us inestimable advantages in developing that trade.”<sup>32</sup>

In 1900, Senator A.J. Beveridge described the Philippines as the gateway to the China trade and essential for the US to possess. He predicted that most future wars would be about commerce and asserted that the China trade was vital to future American interests. He also maintained that, “The Power that rules the Pacific, is the Power that rules the World. And with the Philippines, that Power is, and will forever be, the American people.”<sup>33</sup> Secretary of State John Hay believed that, “The storm center of the world has shifted...to China. Whoever understands that mighty Empire...has a key to world politics for the next five centuries.”<sup>34</sup>

Others were appalled by the US’s apparently imperial behavior. Roosevelt’s psychology professor at Harvard, William James, condemned the US’s actions in taking the Philippines, “We can destroy their ideals but we cannot give them ours.”<sup>35</sup> Others condemned American military intervention in the affairs of millions of people in foreign lands, even if it was judged to be good for them, maintaining that the American constitution should not be imposed on others by force. The Republican William E. Mason warned, “God almighty help the party that seeks to give civilization and Christian liberty hypodermically with thirteen inch guns.”<sup>36</sup> This echoed the complaints of some regarding the earlier annexation of Hawaii, that the “blessings of civilization” were merely a convenient American slogan for political and economic domination on the European

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32 Lewis and Steele (2001), p. 37.

33 Thorne (1978), p. 20. Beveridge believed that the Anglo-Saxons were “the exploring, the colonizing, the administering force of the world” which must “obey its blood, occupy new markets as debased civilizations and decaying races disappear—the instinct of empire.” They were “The Lords of Civilization... Nations shall no more war without the consent of The American Republic.” Stephanson (1996), p. 100.

34 Zimmermann (2002), p. 446.

35 Zimmermann (2002), p. 342.

36 Miller (1982), p. 27.

model, "...they proclaim to the "children of nature" that peace is a jewel from heaven—while Krupp and Maxim ride anchor in the bay."<sup>37</sup>

Senator Swanson warned that large numbers of troops would be required to fight an inevitable guerrilla war over many years, and that they would inevitably end up committing atrocities as the Spanish had done. His pessimism and estimates of the large number of troops that would be required were not popular with the "imperialists" who maintained that Americans and their values would be welcomed in the Philippines, unlike European imperialists.<sup>38</sup>

On 20 June 1898, Senator J.S. Morrill maintained in the Senate that, "We cannot afford to denounce and forbid all acquisitions of territory in the Western Hemisphere by European governments...and forthwith embark in a thus be-damned enterprise ourselves...We must practice what we preach." On 9 January 1899, Senator G.F. Hoar noted that the Monroe Doctrine had become defunct and every European nation now had the right to acquire territory in the Western Hemisphere. Even some in the US military were critical, rather as Ulysses Grant had condemned American aggression in the Mexican-American War.<sup>39</sup> Major General J.P. Story believed that the Philippines insurrection, "was better justified than our Revolution of glorious memory."<sup>40</sup>

Despite these controversies, there was a sympathetic climate in the US that made the British Empire seem more admirable than it had a century earlier, or a few decades later. In his inaugural address, Theodore Roosevelt noted the benefits of British rule in India and Egypt.<sup>41</sup> "It is infinitely better for the whole world that...England should have taken India...the success of the Sepoy revolt would have been a hideous calamity to all mankind, and those who abetted it...would have been traitors to mankind...The same reasoning ap-

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37 Lopez and Patterson (1904), pp. 1–2.

38 Miller (1982), p. 27.

39 Lieutenant U.S. Grant described his march into Mexico as "unholy," designed to excite the Mexicans into hostilities, "I felt sorry that I had enlisted." One American regimental commander in General Taylor's force said that "We have outraged the Mexican Government by an arrogance and presumption that deserve to be punished." Martinez (1975), pp. 55 and 66. S.W. Haynes condemned President Polk's, "Violation of (Mexico's) territorial sovereignty" and "his decision to wage a war of conquest on spurious grounds." Haynes (2002), p. 209.

40 Introduction to Lea (2001), p. xx.

41 Roosevelt (1995), p. 188.

plies to our dealings with the Philippines.”<sup>42</sup> In 1900, Mahan also applauded the role of the European empires which “are advancing the outposts of our civilization.”<sup>43</sup>

If Roosevelt was hopeful that the US would replicate British rule in the Philippines, perhaps he was mindful that this American imperial venture had been abetted by its erstwhile imperial rival Britain.<sup>44</sup> Admiral Dewey’s American Asiatic squadron was based in Hong Kong where the Royal Navy helped him prepare to attack the Philippines, and in the subsequent confrontation with the Germans in Manila Bay in June 1898.<sup>45</sup>

The British imperial experience also had much in common with other European ventures, which all enjoyed measures of lesser success, but which all ultimately went the way of Xanadu. Whether Europe’s empires represent an historic failure or a landmark in human progress may be a judgment best made in the 22nd century. The British imperial drama closed shortly after the glorious yet destructive scenes of 1945, but that of the US seems set to have a few more acts at least. The Russian empire lasted longer than most, falling eventually with the collapse of the USSR. It may be that the US is the last of the “European” empires left standing, at least in the sense that Mahan and Roosevelt used that term.

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42 Roosevelt (1995), p. 182.

43 Mahan (2003), p. 18.

44 Cooperation at that time sometimes took unusual forms. American ships under Admiral Kautz joined the British Royal Navy in shelling Samoan villages. The Captain of *HMS Porpoise* explained the mission, “We are out here in this beastly God-forsaken country and we had to have some fun to keep alive.” During this recreational firing, a shell from the *USS Philadelphia* narrowly missed the American consul’s house, but killed a US Marine. Miller (1982), p. 164.

45 Roosevelt had played a crucial role in shaping the war with Spain. One afternoon during negotiations with Spain, Navy Secretary John D. Long, kept a doctor’s appointment and left his Assistant, Roosevelt, in charge of his Department. Roosevelt put the US Navy on a war-footing and sent Admiral Dewey to Hong Kong with instructions to take Manila in the event of war. Long felt unable to countermand these measures.

### III. Case History One: The Raj Optimism

Joseph Stalin told Joachim von Ribbentrop that it was “ridiculous...that a few hundred Englishmen should dominate India.”<sup>46</sup> Bismarck maintained that British work in India would be one of the British Empire’s lasting monuments and Theodore Roosevelt maintained that the British had done “marvellous things in India” that they might “...as century succeeds century transform the Indian population, not in blood, probably not in speech, but in government and culture, and thus leave (their) impress as Rome did hers on Western Europe.”<sup>47</sup> These judgments look increasingly sound, but if so, how was such successful nation-building achieved?

#### A. Ends

The British perception of what their empire in India was for, its ends, evolved over time as their rule changed both the region and themselves. Simultaneously, Britain and its own society were being transformed at an unprecedented rate with an Agricultural Revolution, an Industrial Revolution, and the creation of a wider global trading empire linked to both. Yet, the inspiration of empire and those who would build it was not merely material—it aspired to higher ends, the more so as time went by.

What in retrospect could be construed by 1947, to have been a nation-building venture, began with a purely selfish, mercenary intent, serving private commercial interest more than Britain’s national interest, although the former also served the latter. For its first hundred years, the British presence was embodied in the rule of a multi-national corporation, The British East India Company. Its regime ended with the “Indian Mutiny” of 1857, and thereafter the British Government was directly responsible for the rule of what became the British Raj, presided over in time by a Queen/King-Emperor. By 1897, India was regarded as a vital element in Britain’s self-evident greatness, one requiring a commensurate and almost limitless national commitment. The notion that In-

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46 Gilmour (2005), p. xiii.

47 Gilmour (2005), p. xiii.

dia was an indispensable element in Britain's global power and domestic fulfillment was challenged by few until the decades before its independence.

The imperial call of Victoria's empire was most memorably articulated in 1870 by John Ruskin in his inaugural lecture as Slade Professor at Oxford. His theme of Imperial Duty inspired a generation. "There is a destiny now possible for us, the highest ever set before a nation to be accepted or refused." His words were, however, as much about the requirements and opportunities for Britain as about any noble moral purpose to improve others. England "...must found colonies as fast as she is able, formed of her most energetic and worthiest men;—seizing every piece of fruitful waste ground she can set her foot on." Disraeli also adopted a higher moral tone at the Congress of Berlin in 1878 claiming to represent an "Empire of liberty, truth and of justice."<sup>48</sup>

Some saw the British Empire, and naturally the rule of its largest component India, to be an expression of some grander racial and cultural Anglo-Saxon destiny beyond mere commercial gain. India was not a territory for European settlement like North America, Australia, and Africa; but India's rule by Anglo-Saxons certainly befitted what the science of the day seemed to endorse. The works of Darwin and Spencer, read in conjunction with Smiles and even the earlier works of Malthus, could readily be interpreted by Lord Salisbury, Cecil Rhodes, A.T. Mahan, and Theodore Roosevelt as a mandate for their policies.

In 1870, the Viceroy Lord Mayo urged the Indian Civil Service (ICS) to "Teach your subordinates that we are British gentlemen engaged in the magnificent work of governing an inferior race."<sup>49</sup> However, Alfred Lyall, Governor of the North West Provinces in 1882, fretted over the apparent scale of such a project, one nation changing the culture of a vastly more populous one. Had there ever been a people who became "reconciled to a dominant race, which held all high offices in its hands," treating its subjects "with patronizing kindness, professing to teach" them everything?<sup>50</sup> There had been

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48 Morris (1979a), p. 383.

49 Gilmour (2005), p. 19. Mayo was assassinated by a Pathan in 1872. The conviction that one race was bound to rule another rankled those who later saw their role very differently. Carl Pope, serving with the Peace Corps in India in the 1960s resented being called "Sahib," but "it stuck to my white skin like beggars at bus stops." Quoted in Fischer (1998), p. 166.

50 Gilmour (2005), p. 17.

“...no instance in history of a nation being educated by another nation into self-government and independence; every nation has fought its [own] way up.”<sup>51</sup>

The justification for British rule was not merely one of racial theory, but rather one postulating a universal validity for the ideas of “The West,” a concept perhaps first coined by Benjamin Kidd in 1902,<sup>52</sup> and followed by a tide of other work describing either the eventual triumph of such ideas, or the lethal threat that they faced.<sup>53</sup> Racial theories have long since lost their champions, but the idea that Western culture and values have a unique and universal appeal that will prevail, or rather should prevail, in the face of those of lesser merit, is perhaps even more common today than it was 100 years ago.

By the mid-19th century, Britain was being driven by an evangelical zeal to take its own values to the world, just as its Evangelicals had led the Abolitionist movement in Britain 50 years earlier, and then taken this unprecedented idealism to the world at the point of the gun. Yet William Wilberforce viewed British nation-building in India as a greater cause than the abolition of slavery. “Let us endeavour to strike our roots into their soil, by the gradual introduction and establishment of our own principles and opinions, of our laws, institutions and manners, above all, as the source of every other improvement of our religion and consequently of our morals.”<sup>54</sup> James Mill maintained that, “...their minds were enchained more intolerably than their bodies; in short that, despotism and priestcraft taken together, the Hindu, in mind and body, were the most enslaved portion of the human race.”<sup>55</sup> Abolitionism had a moral foundation and an agenda of broader ideas beyond the mere ending of the practice of slavery. It had nothing about it of relativism or appeasement.

In the 1830s, the Evangelical chairman of the East India Company’s Court of Directors maintained that Indian territory had fallen under British rule, not merely to make a profit but so that “...we might diffuse amongst their inhabitants, long sunk in darkness, vice and misery, the light and benign influence of truth, the blessings of well-

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51 Porter (2005), p. 33.

52 Kidd (1902).

53 See for example, Curle (1926), Stoddard (1922), and Chiozza Money (1925).

54 Morris (1979a), p. 74.

55 Quoted in Wilson (2002), p. 202.



regulated society, the improvements and comforts of active industry.”<sup>56</sup> This was clearly at odds with any idea of independence for a new Indian nation, at least until the Indians had been thoroughly transformed in every way. Such a transformation was far from being mainstream British policy, which had pragmatically recognized the need to respect local religions and customs, and this was especially so after the Mutiny of 1857.

The idea of independence was nevertheless mooted in the mid-19th century. Sir Charles Trevelyan, a Governor of Madras, maintained that an independent India would prove a monument to British benevolence. There seemed little prospect, however, that Indian culture could be transformed to meet either the moral or the material criteria for that independence any time soon. Both criteria were nevertheless seen to be a part of the patriotic imperial mission. When the Empress Bridge across the Sutlej was opened in 1878, the Bishop of Lahore declared it a monument to the Christian virtues of faith, patience and hard work. Its technical wonders reinforced the idea of British superiority—“sway.”

By the 1890s, the Colonial Office was working to improve agriculture, veterinary medicine, husbandry, the treatment of tropical diseases and social welfare. Carlyle believed that history had assigned the British people two great undertakings; the first the immense industrial task of conquering half the planet for the use of man, and the second the grand constitutional task of “sharing in some pacific endurable manner, the fruit of said conquest...”<sup>57</sup>

Such ideas were connected to practical action through the men in whose heads they resided, the members of the ICS. Clive Dewey has convincingly argued that leading members of the ICS were in essence guided by the contemporary values of their families and education, and that it was these that gave the ICS its distinctive character<sup>58</sup>—one which cannot be replicated by mandate in another age. These bureaucrats of the ICS were expressions of a *zeitgeist*. They were steeped in Benthamite Utilitarianism<sup>59</sup> and Evangelicalism, the Gospel of Uplift and the Cult of Friendship, vested ideas, not vested

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56 Morris (1979a), p. 74. By the end of the 19th century there were 360 missionary bodies maintaining 12,000 missionaries in the field across the empire.

57 Quoted in Morris (1979b), p. 361.

58 Dewey (2003).

59 Frank Lugard Brayne, for example, believed that the Indians were “sunk in sin” and that their poverty was due to indolence and extravagance. He focused on improving the morals of peasants and developing a spirit of self-help as the prerequisites for material improvement. His project *Village Uplift in India*, was the classic expression of this conviction; but one which he could turn into policy. Brayne also won the Kadir Cup for pig-sticking and a Military Cross for gallantry.

interests. Today's senior nation-building bureaucrat is likely to have a very different intellectual complexion and experience.

Yet Lord Salisbury had been skeptical and had no great faith in the universal acceptance of democracy, "The principle of election or government by representation is not an eastern idea. It does not fit eastern tradition or eastern minds."<sup>60</sup> He believed that Indians would support whoever proved capable of ruling—whoever could hold "sway." Many noted that there seemed to be an inherent contradiction between good governance and self-government. For Gladstone, the empire's role was paternalistic, to help the oppressed;<sup>61</sup> while for Disraeli it was the promotion of "Imperium and Libertas." Exactly how these intellectual totems measured up in any manifesto for eventual Indian independence was far from clear; and clarity in itself would probably have been damaging.

Britain's rule in India was nevertheless, to many involved in it, to be the means by which its own "civilization and Christian morality" would cast out "heathenism and barbarism." So today, the victories of Western societies in winning their own universal franchise and individual liberties, expressed in formulations of democracy and assertions of Human Rights, are to be taken to the rest of the world, if necessary at the point of the gun.

These ends became the justification for their endeavors in the minds of those who built the British Empire, and they were thus closely linked to a crucial means, individual motivation, and effort. At different times the ways varied, with mixed success. The empire's ends could only be achieved because of those Britons whom Kipling termed "the Doers"—Roosevelt's "pioneers" and "energetic practical men." It was a big stage with grand actors. How many of today's nation-builders will have countries, cities, towns and bridges named after them, and have the local inhabitants decide to keep those names and the statues of them after they have gone?<sup>62</sup>

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60 Quoted in James (2003), p. 343. This view was apparently shared by President Ulysses Grant. In 1872, Grant met the Emperor Meiji of Japan and advised great caution in accepting popular democracy and institutions such as an elected legislature, measures which could not be readily reversed. His advice was as surprising as that of Vice President Richard Nixon in 1953 who described the prohibition in the Japanese Constitution on Japan maintaining armed forces as "an honest mistake." Quoted in Buruma (2003), p. 132.

61 Much of Gladstone's family fortune came from the slave-trade, just as much of F.D. Roosevelt's apparently came from opium.

62 Removing statues has been a powerful symbol of regime change, as the images of Stalin, Lenin, and Saddam Hussein have been transformed into scrap. Some have complained that this amounts to vandal-

## B. Ways

### 1. Long-Term Commitment

At the end of the 19th century, there was little problem motivating the British people for the long haul. There was pride in their empire which was seen to be a source of strength. India was on the global trade routes and held safe by its own locally recruited Indian Army; and that Army was also a source of strength in holding the rest of empire. At times, the Raj seemed to be not even some long-term project, but rather one with a reassuring permanence, the natural condition. The notion of independence at some indefinable point in the future was more a figment of imagination than a plan; and it was scarcely to be doubted that India was too vital a national interest to be sacrificed. The ends were powerfully supported in the British mind, but the means were slender, and so the ways had to compensate.

It was a difficult balance. There was the working assumption that Indians were to be trained to take over the rule of their country from the British, but to get to that point it was necessary in the meantime to maintain the impression that “for practical purposes you must act as if Britain were to rule India for all time.”<sup>63</sup> Only thus could intangible “sway” retain its magic power. Longevity and even the aura of permanence were powerful means of protecting the rule of the Raj, so long as such an impression remained credible. If it were not credible, any proclaimed longevity might act as a running sore, but this did not come to pass until the Raj’s final decades when the mask began to slip and “sway” to sag.

There are dangers when a nation that has occupied another is known to be departing. It can remove any motive for continuing cooperation with the occupying “lame-duck” force; it can precipitate civil war, or at least inter-communal bloodshed between different religious groups, whose beliefs are unlikely to have been modified by any military occupation; and it can provoke possibly violent action between new political entities

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ism bereft of broader historical perspectives. On independence in 1947, the new Government of India placed all the statues of Delhi together in a “ghetto park.” They invited the other cities of India to send them their bronze Victorias, Curzons and Goughs, assuming that they would fill the ghetto. To some surprise, the provinces of independent India preferred to keep their symbolic reminders of British rule.

63 Duff Grant, speaking in 1885, quoted in Gilmour (2005), p. 22.

jostling for future political power. This can damage any social and economic progress achieved by the nation-building force just when it is most required, at the point of independence. Such phenomena were indeed evident in the final decade of the Raj. When the Americans left Vietnam (though not an occupier), their South Vietnamese allies did not last long, and the Soviet Union's allies were rapidly toppled once its own forces had withdrawn from Afghanistan.

There is a valid debate about whether a force such as the Coalition's in Iraq after 2003 faced an insurgency or a resistance movement. A debate which is more semantic than substantial is whether it then found itself an element in a civil war or merely sectarian violence.<sup>64</sup> What is clear and typical of a relatively short, uninvited occupation of a country by the forces of another is that resistance to the occupier tends to turn into fighting between those parties who would rule once the occupier has departed.

Any hint of an "exit strategy" from the British Raj would have been seriously detrimental. Had the people of the Indian sub-continent at any time thought that the British presence was likely to disappear in the near future, they would continually have had to bear this in mind in their relationships with each other as well as the British. They would have had very strong motives not to cooperate in a way that would have been seen as "collaboration" by those who might hold the power of life and death over them once the British had gone. As it was, some of these problems arose in a minor way once British departure seemed inevitable, but by then many of the conditions for subsequent success had been laid.

Knowing, or at least believing, that the British would be an enduring presence and that their grand-children would very likely have to deal with the grand-children of the British they knew, gave a profound stability to the rule of the Raj. Developing positive relations with the British seemed like the only sensible proposition, albeit with the hope that the ideas the British were teaching them about self-determination, individual liberty, democracy, and freedom of speech would one day be realized. That hope was matched in the twilight years of the Raj by the belief of many that agitation might bring that day closer.

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64 The British envoy in Baghdad in Summer 2006, William Patey, was reported as having a gloomier personal view than that offered in public, believing .."a de facto division of Iraq is probably more likely at this stage than a successful and substantial transition to stable democracy." Beeston and Philip (2006), p. 6. A spokesman for the Iraqi Ministry of the Interior was reportedly more direct, "If I told you there was no civil war in Iraq, I would be lying." Hussein and Hirst (2006), p. 28.

Some went beyond mere agitation. The Japanese consulate in Calcutta was the centre of Japanese espionage in India from 1936, in conjunction with the German vice-consul in the city, the Baron von Richthofen. Japanese infiltration of British India was often under cover of Buddhist charitable movements, with Japanese agents disguised as monks making frequent visits to Benares and Gaya. On 12 November 1940, Aung San visited Japan to discuss setting up the Burmese Defence Army (BDA), which he would command, and its cooperation with the future Japanese conquerors/liberators of his country.<sup>65</sup> The Japanese supported the Indian revolutionary Rash Behari Bose in exile, and in April 1941, Subhas Chandra Bose reached Berlin via Moscow and Afghanistan, an “Indian Lenin.”<sup>66</sup> It was he who led the political and military opposition to Raj under Japanese tutelage.

Many who dreamed of an “Asia for the Asians,” soon came to prefer the British approach to nation-building once they experienced the Japanese variant. Mohan Singh, commander of the Indian National Army (INA), which fought for the Japanese, had believed that Japanese victories raised the morale of all Asians and brought shame on Europeans and the Americans; but he soon saw this credit ebbing away. He noted that the inhabitants of occupied lands had less autonomy under the Japanese than they had had under their former colonial masters; and he continued to see the British in a favorable light.<sup>67</sup>

Once the British departure from India seemed inevitable from the 1920s onwards, but especially after 1941, then internal political arrangements after independence were indeed the key factor in affairs. Those affairs were bound to be complicated. It has become fashionable to assert that India was in a sense a unity, conquered and suppressed by the British, even though the territories that became the Raj were more diverse politically, ethnically, linguistically, culturally, and by religion than was Europe. Hindu India had more than 2,000 castes and 200 languages, and Hindi was closer to English than to Tamil; primitive

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65 In June 1940, Aung San had been particularly offended by the British placing a price on his head of just five Rupees, the price of a chicken. Bayly and Harper (2004), p. 12. Aung San’s daughter went on to become a prominent dissident against the Burmese Government fifty years later, a government worse in every way than that of the Raj it replaced.

66 Subhas Bose’s war-cry was “Chalo Delhi,” (Onward to Delhi), the cry of the mutinous sepoy of 1857.

67 After the war, contrasting his experience of the Japanese with his knowledge of the British, Mohan Singh praised the nobility of the British race which he had once hated.

animists coexisted with Nobel laureates; and Baden-Powell's survey of the agricultural systems of India ran to 500,000 words.<sup>68</sup> Islam added the most volatile ingredient.

The Maharaja of Cooch Behar maintained that if the British ever left India he would go too, for "Chaos, bloodshed and confusion would be its lot."<sup>69</sup> His judgment was not wide of the mark, at least in the short term. In 1884, Sir Madhava Rao, a former minister of Baroda told General Roberts that if the British were to leave it would be like opening the doors of the cages in a zoo. "There would be a terrific fight amongst the animals which would end in the tiger walking over the dead bodies of the rest."<sup>70</sup> He cited the Moslem north as the "tiger." The French intellectual, Paul Boell, visiting India in the early 20th century said that the question was not whether Britain had the right to stay in India, but whether it had the right to leave and abandon India to bloody anarchy.

The British presence had indeed largely smothered potential conflicts, but Britain's departure exacerbated old religious differences and led to fixing new political boundaries to reflect these. Up to a million people may have died in the resulting communal bloodshed.

Some would like to blame the British for this violence, their having been responsible for ruling much of the region for 200 years. It is probably more accurate, if less pleasing for this constituency, to recognize that under British rule such warring had been largely stamped out, that the subcontinent had been relatively peaceful by its own historic standards under the British, and that this reversion to large-scale communal violence was precipitated by the knowledge that the British were leaving, not because they were there. The re-drawing of boundaries reflected the wishes of local political leaders, not those of the British—except in recognition of that reality.

Against the trend, the Indian historian Kusoom Vadgama has recognized the more obvious point and judged that, "India is richer for the railways, the telegraphic systems, education, legal and parliamentary procedures based on the British models" and suggests

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68 Dewey (1993), p. 4.

69 Quoted in James (2003), p. 323.

70 Gilmour (2005), p. 27.

that it was the Quit India movement of 1942 that pushed Britain towards premature withdrawal and partition.<sup>71</sup>

The sectarian violence, or civil war between religious communities, leading to partition between India and Pakistan in 1947, Burma, and later Bangladesh, was followed in the coming decades by wars between India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, in effect an on-going “civil war” between elements of the old Raj. These disputes have yet to be settled, and Burma has been steadily reversing any successes of British nation-building for 60 years.

The inter-communal violence of 1947 was not targeted at the British who departed on surprisingly good terms with their former imperial subjects. By then, nearly 200 years after the Battle of Plassey and 100 years after the Indian Mutiny, opposition to the British was not expressed through the wishes of a Moghul Emperor or Nizams and Rajah’s. Rather, it was led by reputable political parties, many of whom had taken their inspiration from the British Left, and were intent upon asserting the popular will through a democratic electoral process similar to Britain’s. It was they who would remove all power from the traditional rulers and replace them with a Westminster-style democracy, a step the British themselves had been reluctant to take. The British would leave, but left much behind. Their ideas on law, constitutional Government, a “loyal opposition,” the English language and sports<sup>72</sup> have been nurtured in India rather than rejected.

## 2. Rule by an Elite

The perception that the Raj was a long-term project encouraged a sense of commitment among those who would rule it. It was not merely a project, but a career, and as such could attract high-grade material rather than “chancers” out for quick pickings. Longevity permitted the creation of a talented ruling elite to which much of its success may be attributed.

By 1897, about 20 million Britons were living throughout their empire as settlers or merchants, but the number that ran it was much smaller. That year, there were perhaps 20,000 Britons in India, not counting the British Army. Of these, 3,000 were officers in

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71 Quoted in Holmes (2005), p. xxii. To the contrary, Narendra Singh Sarila has maintained that the British favored partition, fearing the influence the USSR would have over a unified but Hindu-dominated state. Sarila (2006).

72 There had been a golf club in Calcutta since 1829.

the Indian Army and about 10,000 were in commerce. The Raj had devised an extraordinarily effective system and method of ruling its vast and populous territory, given its slender means.

One might also conclude that, despite many protestations to the contrary, the people of India did not chafe too badly to be free of the British. If they did, then they were extremely incompetent in acting upon that impulse. The more likely explanation is that the British ruled relatively well and that their dominion was for the most part accepted.

At the end of the 19th century, the elite band of about 1,000 in the ICS ruled 300 million Indians. By 1937, there were still only 1,384 ruling perhaps 400 million. The British were not very visible, they had merely replaced the small native elite that had once ruled the same mass of people.

Sound administration alone did not explain the success. Some saw other factors at work. William Horne who served in the Madras Government between 1882–1914 felt that the only way in which so many millions who never saw a British soldier or a Sepoy could be so passive to alien rule was the mystical “prestige of race.” [Editor’s note: A Sepoy was an Indian native employed as a soldier in the service of a European power, usually of the United Kingdom.]

Benevolent despotism had practical advantages. For example, a few men could alone draft a magnificent legal code for India, and decision-making was seldom mired in controversy, even if its bureaucratic implementation might often be ponderous.

Although the number of “Doers” was small, the price they were prepared and required to pay was high. The mortality rate was awful and ICS men died from overwork, worry and sickness. At end of 19th century, about one third of an ICS intake would be dead after 20 years.<sup>73</sup> The “attrition” on families was especially painful. By 1897, there were said to be 1.5 million British graves in India, indicating a high turnover of the few who lived there at any one time, but especially of their children.

Few expected thanks. As Kipling put it, “If an advance be made all credit is given to the native while the Englishmen stand back and wipe their foreheads. If a failure occurs

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73 In 1852, the annual death rate for British troops in India was 58 per 1,000, more than three times the rate in the UK. Most soldiers posted to India died there.



the Englishmen step forward and take the blame”<sup>74</sup>—a complaint perhaps echoed by other nation-builders today from Africa to the Balkans, Iraq, and Afghanistan where the nation-builder seeks to promote the idea as much as the reality of success by those they tutor.

“History is written by the victors, so decolonization wiped the ICS off the agenda”;<sup>75</sup> but in a sense those victors are in themselves the product and evidence of the success of the ICS—a hard truth for many to bear.

### 3. The Chain of Command

Outside areas of white settlement, the Empire was a great despotism ruled by its own administrators. The Raj was rule of and perhaps for the Indian people, but not by them. Britain was an imperial democracy and its paradoxes were squared in a pragmatic manner familiar to a constitutional monarchy, a construct with many similar anomalies and strengths. The Empire was a Royal one and its unifying icon was the Monarch to whom the loyalty of all was expected. In return they would enjoy *Britannica's Pax*. The authority of the monarch was exercised through men above politics, from Chief Commissioners in minor colonies to Captain Generals, Governor Generals, and above all in prestige and responsibility, the Viceroy of India, a title awarded the Governor General of India in 1858. He lived in a style to match his Monarch whom he embodied, whose “face” he represented and whose “sway” he exercised.

It was clear who ruled India in practice; but the British Government of the day was accountable for that rule to Parliament. The British Parliament was in effect the trustee of the British Empire. It incorporated the elected assembly and legislative authority by which the British people set imperial policy. This policy was executed by the Secretaries of State for the Colonies and India, elected British politicians working under the Prime Minister and the largely symbolic power of the Monarch. These Secretaries presided over the Colonial Office and the India Office which ruled the imperial territories.

Policy for India may have been formulated in the India Office in London, but its execution was delegated to the Viceroy, and the ICS was his executive. This was a national enterprise, free of considerations for the wishes or sensibilities of allies or even wider in-

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74 “On the City Wall,” *Indian Tales*, Project Gutenberg, Free e-Books.

75 Dewey (1993), p. 8.

ternational opinion. Nor was there often much debate about India within the branches of the British Government. For much of the later 19th century, even Parliament took little interest in India, the exception being nationalist Irish politicians who used their own agenda of home-rule for Ireland to belabor the Government on home-rule for India.

The old joke that the ICS was neither civil nor a service, does little to inform our understanding of its achievements. Those who tend to cynicism about the merits of the ICS would be advised to exercise a cautious humility given the record of governance exercised by many organs of the United Nations and the nation-building ventures undertaken in its name and that of other Coalitions. While the United Nations has often evinced a certain idealism in some of its employees, it is no meritocracy, being rooted in national patronage and the imperative for representative diversity, with diverse standards of propriety to match. It also has an unhealthy whiff of undue interest in hard-currency salaries and benefits. There is no objective competitive examination for its posts, and given its nature and purpose there could not be. At the same time, it is probably indispensable.

Few modern bureaucracies can match the high standard of individual attracted to the ICS, their propriety and dedication. This judgment tends to be unappealing, but largely because of the nature of its imperial context rather than because it is untrue. India's administrators were chosen by the authorities in London rather than those in the field to avoid creating self-perpetuating cliques. The ICS may have been ponderous<sup>76</sup> and excessively thorough,<sup>77</sup> but it was probably as incorruptible as any in history, garnering the essential respect of the people it was to administer.

Haileybury was founded in 1805 as a school to train candidates for the ICS and the first exam for entrance was set in 1827; but a wider pool of recruits was needed, and in 1853, all patronage was ended and replaced by competitive open examination. The ICS was indeed a meritocracy; but even so its members might share a common background with the Viceroy. In 1894, the Viceroy and the Governors of Madras and Bombay had all been at Eton together.

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76 It was joked that one ICS directive allowed that documents no longer required could be destroyed, provided copies had been made in duplicate.

77 Before the age of the typewriter in the 1890s, the ICS was producing over 100,000 hand-written documents per year, many very lengthy.

Late Victorian Britain has often been criticized for fostering an anti-commercial ethos in the upper echelons of society, even though Britain excelled in industry and commerce. If true, the obverse of this coin was that fear of being “tainted by trade,” matched by a degree of established wealth, made public service an admirable pursuit for any young man of ability, whether in the imperial administration or the armed forces. Even though the rewards might be less appetizing from a material point of view than banking, insurance or trading commodities, at least public service entailed none of the former’s haunting social stigma. The rule of India could thus attract a consistently accomplished set of highly motivated and well-connected young men, generation after generation. Others could get rich on the back of their good governance.

While the Viceroys might be aristocrats, the ICS was recruited from the British middle-classes, often driven by family tradition. This social cohesion was one of its great strengths. By the later 19th century, two thirds of successful candidates were the sons of the professional and military classes. From 1880–83, half came from Scottish universities and many senior officials in the administration of the Raj were Irish Catholics, many favoring Irish home-rule. In the 1890s, seven out of eight Indian provinces were ruled by Irishmen—they were not in favor of home-rule for India.

Members of the ICS were by preference well-educated, practical gentlemen rather than first-rate scholars. The ICS also fostered a cult of athleticism—the school prefect or captain of games were ideal models. A “Cakey-man” who was too refined was not required.<sup>78</sup> A horseman with manly accomplishments in blood sports, dedication and sharp intellect was ideal. In return, such qualities were rewarded with a higher than average Civil Service salary, disease, loneliness, family separation, adverse climate, hard work, and little thanks. Occasionally there would also be deaths at hands of religious fanatics. ICS men did eight-year tours, and most children who survived were sent home at the age of seven, sometimes with their exhausted mothers. Some ICS men saw their children for only two or three years thereafter.

The academic examination for entry to the ICS was rigorous. Applicants were generally graduates between 21–23 years old who had already stood out from their peers at uni-

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78 When John Lawrence, Chief Commissioner of the Punjab (1853–59), discovered that one of his officers owned a piano, he moved him from one end of the province to another six times in two years, saying, “I’ll smash his piano for him.” Dewey (1993), p. 41.

versity by their diligence. They could attempt any of 21 papers on subjects ranging from Sanskrit, Logic and the Sciences to English Literature, a paper requiring familiarity with over 30 authors.<sup>79</sup> If an applicant did well enough, he would spend a year at a university on probation before sitting the compulsory exam on the Indian Penal Code, one of India's principal languages, the Indian Evidence and Contracts Acts, the code of civil procedure in Hindu and Mohammedan Law, a choice of papers on cultures bordering that of India and then a paper on the History of British India. He had also to take a test in horsemanship and would receive no pay raise until he had passed it, either in Britain or in India.

Imperial rule was not a happy business, rather one of hardship, grit, and sacrifice. The only ones who seemed to have derived pleasure from the venture were the missionaries and the military men looking for adventure. Churchill noted that "The frontier remains a source of perpetual joy to the soldier, but to the politician a problem yet to be solved."<sup>80</sup>

ICS men would often administer vast areas<sup>81</sup> alone, and rule perhaps hundreds of thousands of people in remote areas. This required self-sustaining morale, shored up by the knowledge that they were part of a great club of like-minded men of similar background, sacrificing much in personal terms. They paid with isolation and ruptured family life for the privilege of shouldering their duties as part of an organization with a reputation among their kind almost as esteemed as that of the Royal Navy.<sup>82</sup>

#### 4. Delegation of Authority: Mission Command

Distance and paucity of numbers meant that while policy might come from the India Office, authority for its execution had to be delegated and decentralized—entrusted to the Viceroy and his ICS.

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<sup>79</sup> Exam questions would test today's educated elites. For example: "What experimental methods are applicable to the determination of the true antecedent in phenomena where there may be plurality of causes"; "Describe the various circumstances of situations which give birth to the pleasurable sentiment of power"; "State the argument for and against Utility, considered as (1) the actual, and (2) the proper, basis of morals". Quoted in Ferguson (2002), p. 154. It should be remembered that these were also men who could ride a horse, organize the building of a bridge, and stick a pig for recreation.

<sup>80</sup> James (2003), p. 403.

<sup>81</sup> In Mymensingh, one District Officer was responsible for four million people in an area of 6,000 square miles. Little wonder that the public schools from which such men were recruited emphasised self-reliance and fortitude.

<sup>82</sup> Responsibility could come at a young age to the able. In 1897, Egypt was ruled by three Britons aged 41, 40, and 37.

Delegation was a common necessity before the age of electronic communications.<sup>83</sup> *Auftragstaktik* may have been a Prussian military formulation applied primarily in tactical and subsequently operational endeavors, but it had long been practiced as a necessity at all levels, including the strategic, in the governing of global empires.

By comparison, in an age that admires *Auftragstaktik* in its militaries, were those who spent or failed to spend reconstruction money in Iraq from 2003–06<sup>84</sup> able adequately to use their discretion in theater, or were they bound by peacetime regulations written far away with little knowledge of the needs and circumstances in which it would be spent? If delegation was not granted, was the reason that there was a lack of trust that it would be spent with propriety, and if so was that lack of trust warranted? Some of the seeds of success lie deep in the ethos of organizations and cultural assumptions about them.

## 5. Co-opt a Local Elite

Another reason why this massive enterprise could be run by so few ICS men was that they enlisted the help of the local inhabitants, and that the latter were prepared to be enlisted. The British decided to form a class of educated people who could act as intermediaries between themselves and the great mass whom they hardly saw, or rather who hardly saw them. Government could only work by employing the Civil Service-equivalent of the Indian Army, and each ICS man was supported by Indians of the Babu class.

Not everyone admired the Indian administrator. In 1900, Viceroy Lord Curzon claimed that native officials commanded little respect and tended to absent themselves in a crisis—shades of the criticisms voiced by Coalition forces in Iraq 2003–06. Perhaps the local officials who lived among those they administered had more to lose than their British bosses.

The British also succeeded in creating an Anglophile native elite, above the Babu class. This was done by offering security and respect to existing rulers, but mainly by

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83 Victoria's Diamond Jubilee-greeting to her loyal subjects around the globe was transmitted by telegraph using Britain's great and growing network of oceanic cable.

84 Glanz (2006).

means of education and in some cases friendship.<sup>85</sup> A Hindu College had been founded in Calcutta as early as 1817, providing a Western education. Charles Trevelyan believed that the British should create an Indian who was more English than Hindu. In 1855 there were 47 English schools in Bengal, but by 1902 there were 1,481 with 250,000 pupils. In 1900, Calcutta had the largest university in the world, and between the years of 1857 and 1887, 60,000 Indians entered university.

The Anglophile princely classes of India were co-opted into running the Raj and did not join the mutineers of 1857. There was maybe but one princely dissident at the Delhi Durbar of 1902. The British went to great lengths to keep the princes “on-side.” Many were given a British education but often fell into an easy life of luxury and debauch, to the dismay of their British mentors.

Meanwhile, the great Anglophone middle-class continued to absorb Jane Austen, but also Thomas Paine, John Locke, and the history of the English Civil War. In time these ideas would become instruments to be turned against the Raj and the native rulers; but even so, an affinity for much of the culture of India’s unifying language remains.<sup>86</sup>

## 6. Military

The British Empire was won by conquest, a formidable challenge given the distances involved and the size of the territories and peoples conquered. Bengal fell to the British East India Company following the Battle of Plassey on 23 June 1757, a battle perhaps matched only by military phenomena such as the Battle of Omdurman in 1898 or OPERATION DESERT STORM in 1991.

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85 Some senior ICS men such as Malcolm Darling stuck out from their colleagues in their desire to make personal friendships with Indians, but were subsequently disillusioned when the meaning of friendship was seen to diverge in different cultures and an unequal political situation. To an Indian, friendship might be a personal matter but it was also the necessary and legitimate means by which preferment could be secured and protection gained. The exchange of favors was the currency of friendship. To a man such as Darling, the state, the law and his profession provided a living and protection, friendship was an entirely personal matter. Any request for favors would undermine that friendship. To him, friendship was likely to be an obstacle to recommending an individual for promotion, not a motive for doing so. Dewey (1993), p. 196.

86 Indian educated elites asked why what they were taught did not apply to them. Rather as the Civil Rights movement in the United States asked why the American Constitution seemed in practical terms not to apply equally to all its citizens.

At Plassey, the Bengal Army of Suraj-ud-Daula of about 50,000 men, and 50 guns manned by Frenchmen, was defeated by the East India Company forces of Robert Clive of 3,000, of which only 1,000 were British, with ten guns. Clive's victory cost four Britons killed and ten wounded. It was a similar story at the battle at Buxar on 23 October 1764. The Indian Wars between 1815 and 1857, however, were hard-fought against enemies who were far from primitive and often, like the Sikhs, better-armed than the British. It was in India, not Europe, that the greatest advances in military tactics were developed, largely unseen by the rest of the world, and the American Civil War was fought in ignorance of them.<sup>87</sup>

After Trafalgar, the British Empire faced no serious threat from any European peer, although within a few decades that from Russia was seen to be real enough. That threat ensured that the Northwest Frontier would always be of military consequence, and occasionally the scene of a small war in which the British became well-practiced, realizing in the long process that Afghanistan was one unnecessary and painful step too far.

Major campaigns in India against massive armies were common enough in the first half of the 19th century, and the tactic of divide-and-rule had been a standard ploy to improve the odds since the days of Robert Clive. Military success was matched by a concerted effort to persuade the Indians that in practice rule by the British was permanent, and was going to be at least as tolerable as that of their former rulers.

In 1837, most of the Indian sub-continent's 90 million inhabitants lived under British rule exercised by just 50,000 British civil servants and soldiers. The entire empire was held by just 56,000 British troops, supported by the Royal Navy.

Some would choose to believe that India seethed for 200 years under British rule and that its population was in a state of continuous revolt against oppression. That is far from true; there were seldom more than 70,000 British troops to provide internal security in a population that rose to perhaps 400 million by 1947.<sup>88</sup> The vital ingredient was the Indian Army. True, the British were ever mindful of the Mutiny of 1857 after which the East India Company was required to pass the rule of India to the British Government, but if the people from which the Indian Army was drawn were in such a state of

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87 For example, the challenges of attacking positions defended by artillery had become a familiar one in India, and solutions had been devised. Bailey (2004), pp. 191–3.

88 The achievements and life of the British military in India is described in Holmes (2005).

perceived oppression, it is difficult to understand why the Indian Army was not their primary means of insurgency against the British.

A large measure of British success in nation-building in India can therefore be attributed to the British Army's ability, and before it, that of the East India Company, to establish peace and order, to co-opt large numbers of local forces into their service, and to persuade them to operate loyally to their agenda.<sup>89</sup>

By the late 19th century, military security for the Raj was focused more on external threats to the Northwest Frontier than on internal security. It was the perceived threat from Russia, using Afghanistan as a base to attack the Raj, rather than any desire *per se* to dominate the region, that led to British intervention in Afghanistan and operations to pacify the troublesome frontier.

When British rulers intervened in Afghanistan in 1878–79, they seemed not to have learned from experience. It was thought that the endemic chaos in Afghanistan indicated a lack of national feeling, and the British underestimated the deep hatred of any foreign interference in Afghan affairs. During their rule in 1880, the British commander General Roberts had to continually defend himself against accusations of inhumanity. Roberts noted the challenging mix of nationalism and religion, “In addition to the natural hatred which every Afghan feels towards a foreign invader, there is a strong underlying current of fanaticism which, unless promptly checked, becomes at times, and especially against a Christian enemy, uncontrollable.”<sup>90</sup>

Forming a truly national Afghan government would prove impossible, and the British toyed with the options for rule by various stooges and partition. There was a disaster at Maiwand in July 1880, but this was avenged before victory was declared. Eventually the British Government decided to withdraw all troops, hoping that good behavior in Afghanistan could be assured by the threat of British troops returning. There was no further serious external threat to the Raj until 1941.

The British just managed to hold on militarily in 1941–42; but realized that the game was up. After two world wars, Britain, which might have been able to bear the cost

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89 The training of an indigenous police force was a crucial element in British imperial policy, especially when fighting insurgency. A study of British experience in Malaya and Cyprus in the 1950s with lessons for today is made in Corum (2006).

90 James (2003), pp. 376–77.



of policing India, had shown that it could not afford the cost of defending it against invasion by a wealthy and more populous Asian power determined to evict it from Asia. When it was apparent that British “sway” was waning, the Indians themselves became more assertive about taking charge of their own affairs.

There had been continuous internal security problems since the Mutiny, but on a modest scale given the size of the Raj and the many possible grievances. By 1906, however, small cells were being formed by religious dissidents. Their members underwent lurid initiation rites before assassinating British civilians. Hanging the perpetrators led to a popular culture of public demonstrations and selling on the street icons of the condemned men.

The authorities lacked the strength to prevail by numbers, and from 1905 relied on a massive intelligence network set up by an expanded Special Branch. In this hostile climate it was hard to recruit a larger police force, because its members were part of that society and subject to great intimidation. By 1915, there were about two violent political incidents per month in Calcutta, and personal attacks could often reach across time and distance.

Internal security operations were not merely of detached military interest. They touched on perceptions of the Raj in Britain and India, and its very viability. The rulers of the Raj had to contend not only with their opponents but with the press that reported their handling of them. The British protected a free press in India as a matter of principle but suffered the consequences. In 1885, there were 319 Indian language- and 96 English language papers, and many of the former maintained ferocious personal attacks on individual British rulers and the Raj as a whole.

The war in Afghanistan was widely criticized in the press, provoking questions in Parliament about the treatment of prisoners and whether the British Army was taking sufficient care to avoid civilian casualties. Many who had experience of active service were angered by comments from those safe at home. The future Lord Minto wrote, “I long to encamp the British public in a place like Ali Khey for a night with Gladstone, Chamberlain or Dilke and a few others on outpost duty...(the British public)...is the most sensational ass I know. Capable of either preaching humanity towards brutes like these people here, or losing their head and going into lightstrikes when the savage gives them the worst of it.”<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> James (2003), p. 375.

It was widely believed that the admittedly rare assassinations of British officials were incited by the Indian press, but the British press was also critical when it found some *cause célèbre*. In 1886, *The Times* of London reported that the previous year a Colonel Hooper, conducting pacification operations in Mandalay, had been responsible for “ghastly scenes” during executions recorded by an eager press photographer. Parliament was outraged by other stories of extensions of martial law and the intimidation of prisoners. British troops were warned that during operations against insurgents they should avoid any action that would be repugnant to public opinion.

Scandal over the alleged mistreatment of prisoners has been a staple of operations to this day, from the concentration camps of the Boer War, to the prisons for the Mau Mau in Kenya and the internment of IRA members in Long Kesh—the latter a lightning rod for international condemnation, abandoned in 1976. These have been augmented by complaints about the dangers of special legal measures, internment without trial and non-jury trials. Today, Guantanamo, “special rendition” and evolutions of international law add novel dimensions to a familiar theme.

By the 1890s, Secretaries of State for India had to continually offer a positive image of British rule to satisfy criticism in Parliament. Government had to always stress that policy was progressive and reforming. However, even progressive action such as health programs could be misconstrued and meet cultural resistance. For example, stories in the press in 1900 that inmates of plague isolation hospitals were being tortured led to riots in Cawnpore.

Major General Sir Charles Napier believed that the best recipe for ruling a country was “a good thrashing first and kindness afterwards.”<sup>92</sup> Military power may have created and held the Raj, but the way in which it was ruled was not primarily military, it was the combination of political, economic, and social action that was the key. In practice, India was ruled by consent—but many find this truth unappealing.

## 7. Perceptions

Perception operations are not a purely modern phenomenon. The British paid great attention to how they were regarded by their subjects and perceptions lay at the

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<sup>92</sup> Holmes (2005), p. 60.

heart of the entire imperial project, where “face” and reputation were perhaps even more important than they are today.

It began at the top. Indian Princes were judged susceptible to men of their own kind, so all Viceroys were aristocrats. Associating the princes with British rule was an essential part of legitimizing what was subtly portrayed as merely a continuation of rule on the Moghul model.

The pageantry of the Moghuls was revived with *darbars*.<sup>93</sup> The first in 1876 was attended by 400 Indian princes and 15,000 redcoats to remind all present where power lay. The Chief Minister of Gwalior described the event as “The epitome of every title to command and govern which one race can possess over others.”<sup>94</sup> The Prince of Wales visited India that year and co-opted many native rulers into the imperial project by handing out decorations of the newly created Order of the Star of India. Other orders were created such as the Order of the Crown of India and the Order of British India. This theme was reinforced in January 1877, when Queen Victoria was made Empress of India.

Indians were thereby reminded that their country was united again and that the British were but the continuation of an ancient legitimate tradition. It was perhaps a similar ploy to that of the German Kaiser Wilhelm I’s imagery at Goslar, whose purpose was to show the Second Reich as the natural heir to the First. By the 1880s, Queen Victoria was a cult figure in India with her image in many temples and her face on coins revered by many in domestic shrines. In January 1901, the reaction to her death showed the depth of her emotional hold on the Indian people. In Calcutta, thousands mustered spontaneously without food, with banners professing the grief of anguished “Musselmen,” and traders demonstrated even greater sincerity by closing during this mourning.

Lord Curzon’s *darbar* of December 1902 was the most splendid to date. In his words, it offered “A glimpse of a higher ideal, an appreciation of the hidden laws that regulate the march of nations and the destinies of men.”<sup>95</sup> This was again outdone by George V’s *darbar* of December 1911—the ultimate symbol of British “sway.”

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93 The court kept by an Indian ruler; a public audience or levee held by a native prince, or by a British governor or viceroy in India. OED Online, (2007).

94 Quoted in James (2003), p. 316.

95 Quoted in James (2003), p. 317.

## 8. Respect for Local Culture—Up to a Point

Every colony of the Empire was governed by its own arrangements of baffling complexity.<sup>96</sup> There was no attempt to impose the uniformity of Rome or Napoleon. Even in India the Raj ruled directly in 250 districts,<sup>97</sup> but also through its control of the potentates of the 600 native states with which British India was intertwined geographically and by treaty, rulers who held power only in theory and in matters of minor consequence. Kings, emirs, and wizards all had roles in the imperial script. People could see that at least the appearances of that which was their own was maintained and their hierarchies respected, even if these had little substance when set against the fundamentals of British rule.

In the late 18th century, East India Company men were warned that it was not their job to turn India into Britain, but rather to work through native ways with prejudice in their favor. Until the early 19th century, chaplains of the East India Company were banned from preaching to Indians, and it was regarded as politically foolhardy to irritate them by evangelizing. Rather, the emphasis was on protecting their rights to follow their own religion.<sup>98</sup>

The East India Company had an overwhelmingly commercial agenda, not a nation-building one. Americans played a prominent role in the early days of the Company and of British rule in India, and they took full advantage of its opportunities.<sup>99</sup> Men like the American brothers Thomas and Elihu Yale were important figures in “John Company,” although both faced censure for the methods by which they amassed their fortunes. Elihu made his as Governor of Madras and donated a large sum to his old school which showed its gratitude by renaming itself after him in 1718—times when the provenance of donations was perhaps subject to less detailed scrutiny than today. Until the Evangelicals had their way, Company men were more intent on enjoying the exoticism of the

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96 In 1897, there were 43 separate and different governments in the British Empire. The island of St. Helena was declared to be a ship and ruled accordingly by its captain.

97 In 1900, each had an average population of 900,000.

98 Proselytizing was also forbidden by the Peace Corps, despite the strong religious beliefs of many of its members that had drawn them to that work. Fischer (1998), p. 88.

99 Perhaps the most influential American in the affairs of British India was the Vicereine, Lady Curzon, who took a close interest in its culture and the position of women. An aesthete, she observed that the two ugliest things in India were the water-buffalo and the British private soldier. Her unrestrained appetite for turtle soup caused that dish to be named after her.

East than on curbing it.<sup>100</sup> A safe distance from Plymouth Rock, the Bostonian Sir David Ochterlony became the Resident in Delhi in 1803, and entered into the spirit of things. He took to touring the city followed by his 13 wives, each riding upon her own elephant. The Washingtons would probably not have approved.<sup>101</sup>

Before the 1820s, the British tolerated the cult of Thuggee assassins whose adherents went to the Temple of Kali at Bindhachal every year to pay their dues to its priests. The British in India celebrated the Treaty of Amiens by marching to the Temple of Kali with military bands playing. At the end of the 1830s, the British were still taking revenues from the Temple of the Tooth at Kandy. Clearly the British yet felt as visitors in an exotic, foreign land rather than as people with some paternalistic responsibility to re-educate it.

Religious law and traditional practice were respected in conjunction with British laws, and the lawyers of Empire were left to make sense of it all. In parts of West Africa even elements of fetish continued to be recognized. The British believed that to destroy the ancient cultures of those they sought to rule would make that rule impossible. Instead they sought pragmatic means of gaining consent to their rule and to banish only those aspects of local custom deemed too “horrible” to countenance. British society was particularly alarmed by female infanticide,<sup>102</sup> *sati* which was banned in 1829, and by priestly pedophilia. It was only in the 1830s that a special task force was set up under Captain William Sleeman to stamp out the Thuggee cult. This was more a matter of suppressing murder and robbery than a cultural sanction *per se*.

The British also accepted many of the traditional methods of policing. For example in Madras, the treatment of prisoners by the police according to custom, *cayidah pro-caurum*, continued into the 1850s. Immersion in water to the point of drowning was regarded as a necessary measure to secure important information, although it was later banned as “barbarous.”

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100 Even in the 18th century, some in Britain fretted about the adoption by those who had served in India of effeminate Bengali customs such as regular washing, and the use of substances known as *shampoo*.

101 “The Handsome Colonel,” Colonel James Kirkpatrick of Charleston, South Carolina also cut a dash in the sub-continent. His son James Achilles Kirkpatrick, a friend of Ochterlony, caused a sensation as the Resident in Hyderabad by marrying into the royal family, converting to Islam, and perhaps even acting as a double agent against the East India Company. His story is told in Dalrymple (2004).

102 Today, it is estimated that 500,000 female fetuses are selectively aborted in India every year. The West’s reaction to this is more ambiguous, reflecting the “pro-life” and “pro-choice” lobbies.

By the 1830s, the *laissez-faire* attitude to local cultures was waning under pressure from political Evangelicals in Britain—the “Religious Right” of their day. Sir James Stephen, Permanent Under Secretary at the Colonial Office in the 1830s described the “...barbarous and obscene rites of the Hindoo superstition.”<sup>103</sup> To men like Stephen, tolerance of “barbaric practice” seemed as odious as tolerance of the slave-trade they had managed to outlaw. Today, the same intolerance would apply to those activities Western sensibilities cannot celebrate as interesting cultural diversity, such as restrictions on women’s education, female circumcision, child labor, and child prostitution.

This new approach was criticized by many British in India who linked the Mutiny of 1857 to the resentment caused by the proselytizing of missionaries. After 1857, few sought to convert Indians to Christianity and many saw missionaries as mischief-makers. Some thought that interfering with local customs such as female infanticide had also encouraged the Mutiny. Even in the 1920s, there were complaints in the Indian press that by prosecuting a case of *sati*, the British were showing their lack of understanding of a different civilization. In the late 1850s, Queen Victoria resisted any suggestion that local religions be replaced, insisting that all be protected and treated equally under the law.

Trying to making “them” like “us” seemed merely to have led to trouble. Even in the 1840s, Henry Lawrence the President of the Board of Administration in the Punjab told his young men to “Settle the country, make the people happy and take care there are no rows.”<sup>104</sup> Sir Michael O’Dwyer, who became Governor of the Punjab, saw the Raj as the protector of the poor, a view befitting a paternalistic Irish Catholic squire. Some believed that the British were accepted because they defended the poor against their oppressors, while also keeping the loyalty of the princely rulers. In 1896, a Cairo newspaper noted that at least under the British, a peasant could bring a lawsuit against a pasha and actually win his case. As so often in history, it was the Monarch to whom people commonly turned to protect their rights from any perceived abuse by their government. Peasants revolting in Pabna in Bengal in 1873, described their actions as “riots of the Queen of England.”

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103 Morris (1979a), p. 74.

104 Quoted in Gilmour (2005), p. 161.

R.W. Emerson noted that “The English ‘sway’ of their colonies has no root of kindness in it. They govern by their arts and ability: They are more just than kind.”<sup>105</sup> British rule was widely praised by European observers, and even the Indian nationalist N.B. Bonarjee praised the administration’s rectitude, tolerance, justice, and sense of duty. Gladstone told the new Viceroy, Northbrook, in 1872 to preserve peace and goodwill so that eventually the British might leave “a good name and a clean bill of health behind us.”<sup>106</sup>

Both India and Pakistan took pride in modeling their own Civil Services on the ICS. Philip Woodruff, writing after independence, maintained that “If today the Indian peasant looks to the new District Officer of his own race with the expectation of receiving justice and sympathy, that is our memorial.”<sup>107</sup>

In 1890, the British raised the age of consent in India from ten to twelve, a risky measure bitterly resisted by both Hindu and Muslim authorities who found it an intrusion into family and religious life. The Congress Party supported their view against the British who were keen to improve the condition of women. The law was changed but there were no prosecutions for 30 years. Kipling maintained that there would always be a gulf between British and Indian attitudes on the treatment of women.<sup>108</sup>

Here was one of the apparently unbridgeable paradoxes, if the British were to respect local custom, could they also foster and tolerate some form of democracy which would insist upon practices which their own *mores* would find abhorrent? Some felt that democracy could not be transplanted to a non-Christian society and that it followed that British rule had to be absolute because it should never try to represent native “barbarism and heathenism.”

The maintenance of armed retinues, today they would be called private militias, was a matter of tradition and pride for local rulers, even though these often indulged in intimidation and crime. In 1881, there were thought to be 74,000 such armed men in Rajputana alone. Many were fanatical Muslims and Afghan mercenaries, seen as arrogant bullies who terrorized much of the region. By 1900, their numbers had slowly been whit-

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105 Quoted in Morris (1979b), p. 196.

106 Gilmour (2005), p. 23.

107 Holmes (2005), p. 83.

108 James (2003), p. 354.

tled down under the influence of British political officers to 29,000.<sup>109</sup> They were then successfully converted into a disciplined police force, but this had been a long process. The danger of conducting such a process too hastily is that it merely places militiamen and criminals in an armed and uniformed force, undermining the very authority and security they are intended to maintain.

The British may not have been soft-hearted with their subjects, but they certainly knew their character. Even if British rule might be regarded as alien, British justice was generally regarded as fair. The British Penal Code of India drafted by Thomas Macaulay<sup>110</sup> in the early 19th century was regarded by many as better, because of its clarity, than the British law from which it was derived.

It was a matter of satisfaction to some British imperialists that Britain was not loved, and there was no national ambition to be so—perhaps it seemed to confirm Britain's special status in the world.<sup>111</sup> Of the class which ruled the empire, the rarest virtue may have been human sympathy, but the rarest vice cowardice.<sup>112</sup>

The pragmatism of the British approach to government was nevertheless at odds with the idealism of those who felt that they were embarked on a great mission to bring the benefits of civilization and Christianity to the benighted, and it was never resolved. This dilemma is at the heart of the paradox of imperial democracy, as much today in its new forms of Western intervention as it was 100 years ago.

## 9. Cultural Understanding

Respect for local custom and tradition was only possible if those were understood. One reason why the British appeared to have ruled India so successfully for so long was that their judgments were well-informed. They had developed a deep cultural understanding of the sub-continent and the hundreds of distinct and diverse entities it comprised, historically, politically, socially, economically, artistically, and linguistically. Some,

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109 The role of the political officer is described in Holmes (2005), pp. 198–215.

110 T.B. Macaulay was the son of Zachary Macaulay, the leading Abolitionist.

111 Echoes of this are perhaps found today in the motto of some England football fans “Nobody likes us and we don’t care.”

112 The character of British imperialists is engagingly described in Morris (1979b).



however, were not to be persuaded. Lord Dufferin remarked, “You’ll never plumb the Oriental mind; and if you did, it isn’t worth the toil.”<sup>113</sup>

In the first hundred years of British rule under the East India Company, cultural understanding was achieved by a high degree of social integration. In the second hundred years, it was achieved more through the enduring cultural familiarity of a large number of people of a certain inclination, supported by conscientious study.

In the great days of the Raj, all of the departments of government were represented in the India Office in London. It possessed centuries of systematically accumulated knowledge, a great deposit library of cultural treasures presided over by eminent scholars, and it had a statutory right to receive all books published in India in any language. “[I]t knew more...than any office of government, anywhere, had ever known about another country.”<sup>114</sup> Queen Victoria set an example by studying Indian cultures and even took a Moslem *munshi*, Abdul Karim, into her court.

British cultural awareness was accumulated over centuries, it was not a consequence of some short-term operational requirement. There was no directive that those who were to deploy to the sub-continent to rule were now to go on a course lasting several months to become expert before deployment. Young men did attend courses and sit exams, but these merely made them novices, not experts. They joined institutions of government and commerce which were themselves already great repositories of knowledge and wisdom, built up by incremental accretion under generations of their predecessors.

Because the empire was, until the middle of the 20th century, a project without an “exit strategy,” it was both necessary and possible to build a corps of experts in which individuals would devote their lives to understanding the smallest and remotest of possessions and their peoples. Languages were learned not just to permit conversation with a clerk or a farmer, but to gain access to the culture and its ways, to “see the other fellow’s point of view,” even if one didn’t agree with it.<sup>115</sup> It did not seem a futile gesture to

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113 Quoted in James (2003), p. 311. Even some idealists of the US Peace Corps soon developed similar ideas. “You cannot imagine the gulf between East and West, and it makes me laugh now to think that I expected to bridge it with a smile and a handshake.” Quoted in Fischer (1998), p. 164.

114 Morris (1979b), p. 185.

115 Philip Woodruff noted that “Everyone liked the Pathan, his courage and his sense of humour...allegiance was given, if at all, not to a government but to a man.” Holmes (2005), p. 196. It

translate Shakespeare into a language spoken by just 10,000; besides the sort of person who devoted themselves to such a cultural specialization would very likely find the task rewarding enough in itself.

Britain thus came to possess a large class with a global perspective and individuals with a minute knowledge of even small parts of it. A colonial administrator would not do a five-year tour in some remote province and then return home, or move on to another posting in some other part of the world; rather his life would usually be devoted to one place, and it was his responsibility to pass on his knowledge to his successors.

Fostering cultural understanding became a great national educational enterprise in support of the imperial project. It was developed through the work of the great universities with special faculties, and vast museum collections of books and artifacts. Hospitals specialized in tropical medicine, the great trading and shipping companies analyzed the produce, markets, and investment potential of the empire; the oceans were charted and the vast “pink” tracts of the globe were mapped. Above all, virtually every family had some historic connection to, or role in the project; but it was the middle-classes in whom this intellectual repository resided most distinctly. The public schools were the nurseries of the imperial class, and much of the literature that they enjoyed reinforced their own perception of their role in it.

Understanding local culture was not the same as joining it, and the Victorian British were, with notable exceptions, careful to preserve their own sense of caste, aloof from those they ruled. “We English were a caste. White overlords or whiter monkeys—it was all the same. The Brahmins made a circle within which they cooked their food. So did we. We were a caste: pariahs to them, princes in our own estimation.”<sup>116</sup> It was said that the drive to re-create England abroad was to “Defend themselves from the magic of the land by sport, games, clubs, the chatter of fresh-imported girls, and by fairly regular attendance at church, because if they did not the empire would be lost.”<sup>117</sup>

T.E. Lawrence maintained that, “We export two chief kinds of Englishmen. [The great majority] assert their aloofness. They impress the peoples among whom they live

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was not enough to speak a language, it was important to understand the correct form of a language so that a native gentleman might be addressed appropriately rather than as a labourer and vice versa.

116 F. Yeats-Brown, quoted in Holmes (2005), p. xix.

117 Quoted in James (2003), p. 312.

by giving them an example of the foreigner apart. [A few] feel deeply the influence of the native people, and try to adjust themselves to its spirit.”<sup>118</sup>

Of the latter category, some took their cultural interests to extremes. Sir James Abbott “went native” in Hazara and had a district capital, Abbotabad, named after him. Frederick Tucker’s behavior and taste for the bizarre was even more outrageous. He resigned from the ICS after five years, changed his name to Fakir Singh, wandered India as a beggar, and went on to become commander of the Salvation Army in the US.

Breadth of knowledge was essential in building a nation. The British Empire is often blamed for creating nations with inappropriate boundaries. Mistakes were no doubt made, but it is salutary to remember that those who delineated those boundaries almost certainly knew more of the essential facts than did their later critics. In a territory that today comprises an African nation with hundreds of mutually unintelligible languages and complex ethnic and religious relationships, where should the boundaries rather be placed?

## C. Means

### 1. Military

The British had an army to match the imperial policing task, scattered around the globe dealing with the widest variety of military tasks. In 1854, Wolseley described the Army as a steam-engine with its boiler in Halifax, its cylinder in China, and its other machinery distributed wherever the map was colored red. It was a versatile, expeditionary force, well-versed in joint operations, mustering from forward bases and depots overseas, swarming its assets to deal with crises around the globe. In the 1880s when preparing to invade Egypt, the British managed to assemble a fleet of 74 transports in a matter of weeks, to bring a railway from Britain: mules from the US, South America, and Greece; and troops from India and the Mediterranean.

In the event of an unfortunate hostage crisis, British forces conducted joint interventions termed “butcher and bolt,” which today would be called limited interventions or precision strikes. By the late 19th century, the British Army had a doctrine to match its

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118 T.E. Lawrence, “Introduction” to Charles Doughty, *Travels in Arabia Deserta* (1926), quoted in Dewey (1993), p. 1.

mission, born of experience in numerous small frontier wars and internal security duties. This approach was described in the British Army's publication, Charles Callwell's *Small Wars. Their Principles and Practice*.<sup>119</sup>

## 2. Cost

Building empires requires commitment and investment. Without the economic wherewithal, the means to conduct imperial nation-building in India, the project would have been still-born, as was Dupleix's French vision for India, or would have collapsed from exhaustion like the Dutch and Portuguese empires in the Far East.<sup>120</sup>

The debate about the cost of empire was hardly a new one. It had been at the heart of Britain's debate about the loss of its American colonies.<sup>121</sup> Yet it was axiomatic in the minds of the British people that India was an asset, that the Empire was India and that Imperial strategy was about a strategy for India. The Viceroy, Lord Curzon, believed that, "through the Empire of Hindustan...the mastery of the world was in the possession of the British people."<sup>122</sup> Without India, the routes to the rest of the empire,

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119 Callwell (1906).

120 The economics of the Raj are described in Cain and Hopkins (2001), chap. 10.

121 Similar arguments had been common during and following the American War of Independence. In *The Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith concluded that, "If any of the provinces of the British Empire cannot be made to contribute towards the support of the whole empire, it is surely time that Great Britain should free herself from the expense of defending those provinces." Adam Smith believed that any trade lost would be made up elsewhere. F.O. Gorman in Dickinson (1998), pp. 110–111. Robert Clive noted that, "Our wide and extended possessions are become too great for the Mother country or our abilities to manage. America is making great strides towards independency..." Quoted in Harvey (1998), p. 324. He advocated new constitutional arrangements for America and for colonies in the East Indies as well as for the East India Company's possessions in India. Why pay to protect and govern people who could defend themselves after the French defeat in the Seven Years War and with whom you could trade anyway? Opinions that the colonies had been a drain on resources, consuming trading profit in administrative and defence costs found even greater acceptance after American Independence. Josiah Tucker wrote in 1783, "America was ever a millstone hanging around the neck of this country to weigh it down; and we ourselves had not the wisdom to cut the rope, and to let the burden fall off, the Americans have kindly done it for us." J. Cannon, quoted in Dickinson (1998), p. 244. In 1825, Charles Williams Wynn, President of the Board of Control which administered India in place of the East India Company, observed with similar logic that it might be more beneficial to Britain if India were independent. In 1852, Disraeli also spoke of colonies as millstones. Since any successful ones would demand independence, Britain's remaining colonies would be liabilities. Lord Shelburne hoped that even after American independence, a great Anglo-American free trade area might be established in its place as a bulwark against Bourbon absolutism, rather as NATO and the European Economic Community were later seen to be bulwarks against the USSR.

122 Wilson (2002), p. 500.

whether they be around the Cape or through the Suez Canal would be compromised. Without the apparent wealth of the trade with India, how could Britain stand above others? Yet economists did dispute the value of India, given the greater volume and value of trade with places which were not a part of the empire.

They also pointed out the original costs sunk in the conquest of India and the cost of the broader strategic liabilities that holding it entailed. The Empire, its resources and markets, required a fleet to protect it and to guarantee access by control of the “Great Commons”<sup>123</sup>—today the sea, the air, and the media. The wealth of Britain’s industry and trade paid for it, although the historic costs invested in victory at the Battle of Trafalgar were ones that reduced the subsequent costs of maintaining the control of the oceans that victory had secured.

It was, however, acknowledged that India funded its own government at no cost to the British taxpayer, and that the Indian Army doubled the size of Britain’s volunteer Army, constituting a gigantic “barracks” in Asia from which to “police” the rest of its empire at minimal expense, subsidizing the true costs of holding those other territories. The entire proposition was so inter-related that there is little sense in approaching the problem from the point of view of simple income and expenditure.<sup>124</sup>

One reason why India could pay for its own rule was that its economy grew with political stability. In the latter half of the 19th century, it enjoyed massive British investment in its infrastructure of railways,<sup>125</sup> canals,<sup>126</sup> dams, a trans-continental road-system and ports, telegraph, urban water-supply and drains, and vaccination programs on a scale matched only by developments in North America. A coal industry was created from nothing, producing 16 million tons of coal per year by 1914. Even so, by 1880 only

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123 Mahan (2003) and Posen (2003).

124 From 1870–1914, Britain spent on average only about 3% of its GDP per annum on defence and only about 1% of its people served in its military.

125 Half of the railways in Asia were British and most of those were in India, where this ancient infrastructure remains the somewhat decaying heart of the Indian transport system.

126 The British built 40,000 miles of canals to irrigate 20 million acres of arable land, the greatest water-work in history.

about one-fifth of Britain's overseas investment was in India, with most of the remainder going to countries outside the empire such as the US and Argentina.<sup>127</sup>

There have been criticisms that action to prevent famines was complacent, yet much was done to alleviate them by means of integrated railway and irrigation schemes. In 1869, there were 4,000 miles of railways in India and by 1909 there were 31,500 miles, with 5,000 miles laid between 1885–1900. By 1891, it was estimated that the new canal system had made 10 million acres available to cultivate, and one-eighth of the population was dependent upon them. During the drought of April 1897, 33 million people were kept alive in Government labor camps. In Spring 1900, five million people were receiving £8.5 million in government relief. This was humanitarian action on a gigantic scale, beyond the thinking or capability of the Moghuls whom the British replaced. The population increased rapidly between 1871–1901, from 255 million to 285 million as the rule of the Raj curbed traditional “Malthusian checks.” Nevertheless, the British were condemned for doing too little to prevent famine, although it was flattering that they should have been held to a higher standard than those they were criticized for replacing—the lot of the nation-builder to this day.

The British created a virtuous economic circle where their presence generated sufficient wealth to subsidize that presence, or at least without creating such a cost upon the local population as to undermine the stability of the country upon which that wealth depended.

Whether India represented a profit or a loss on Britain's balance sheet overall, the point was that it was affordable, or rather, that the British people were prepared to foot the bill if there was one, until Britain's strategic situation had fundamentally changed and its assets came to look very obviously like liabilities.

### 3. National Motivation

Max Boot has maintained that when it comes to protecting the US's imperial interests and fighting enemies all over the world, “There is no finer example of how to do

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127 By 1914, nearly half of all foreign-owned capital around the world was British, and the British ran the international banking system. Britain owned the largest percent of foreign holdings ever. Between 1870 and 1913, the British capital outflow was 4.5 % of GDP and up to 7%. Between 1865 and 1914, the British invested more capital in the US than in Britain.

this cheaply and effectively than the British Empire.”<sup>128</sup> What “Afghanistan and other troubled lands cry out for is the sort of enlightened foreign administration once provided by self-confident Englishmen in jodhpurs and pith helmets.”<sup>129</sup>

In 1976, Bradford Spangenberg<sup>130</sup> set the popular tone for disparaging the ICS, with a damaging work that accused it of being obsessed with rank and status and driven by narrowly professional motives. Any familiarity with the lives of the ICS and their families makes Spangenberg’s thesis appear mean, narrowly ill-informed, and ideologically motivated.<sup>131</sup> That the vast territory and peoples of India were ruled at such a distance so effectively had as much to do with the culture, quality, and the ICS motivation as with the structure and systems within which they worked.

Few of the actors who ruled the empire of 1897 were motivated by the desire for material reward. They were part of a caste bred over decades, in some cases centuries, to rule and run this great show. Their satisfaction often lay in being part of this production. The actors of empire knew the script, for the earliest drafts were as old as a Shakespeare play. Just as Winston Churchill described the character of the British people to them in 1940, projecting an engaging and heroic image to which they now had to measure up, so the actors of empire received continual direction on the roles they were to play from men like G.A. Henty and Lady Butler, and the scenery of the production became ever more lavish with the Diamond Jubilee itself and the great Delhi *darbars*.<sup>132</sup> Meanwhile, Rudyard Kipling lay in the wings offering prompts when lines were in danger of being forgotten.

The great adventure of empire was a romance analogous to that of the American frontier, which was also partly sustained by self-reference. All could relate to its drama por-

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128 Boot (2005), p. 2. Boot advocated that the US create of a class of colonial administrators and agents similar to that of the British Empire, and to use large numbers of indigenous auxiliaries, conducting nation-building by proxy and by stealth.

129 Porter (2005), p. 32.

130 Spangenberg (1976).

131 The life of those who served in India is movingly described in Buettner (2005).

132 A film of Rider Haggard’s *She*, (*La Colonne de Feu*) was made in 1899. The news-film of the Delhi Durbar was shown around the world, including Vienna, where its visual drama and choreography is thought to have inspired Adolf Hitler, offering ideas of cinematic iconography reflected later in his own shows at Nuremburg. Like the Durbar, this was intended for a nation-wide and international audience, not merely for those who attended.

trayed in popular culture, and those who wished could volunteer to move from the audience onto the stage to fill one of the roles described to them. Some could even *ad lib*.

Without this sense of a profound and exciting dramatic script, a purpose articulated, the community of a troupe on the road, the thrills and perils of the stage, how could the venture have been sustained? Without it, could the producers and financiers be expected to back the show? Who would risk so much for so little? Can future ventures be manned without an ideal, and a band of people mustered as the cast, prepared to devote their lives and careers to it?

If people are to sustain an effort, they must see it as part of their own identity, their mission, not merely a malleable Government policy, here today and gone tomorrow with the next election. They must see it as theirs, not merely that of a government from which they can dissociate themselves at the next opinion poll, personally unaccountable for the actions they voted for in the last election, while blaming those they voted into power and for whose actions they remain morally accountable in theory if not in practice. These are grand projects beyond the whim and vagaries of the opinion poll and electoral-cycle.

## D. Reflections on the Raj

### 1. The Anomalies of Power

The dilemmas facing those advocating and implementing change by force in the name of Democracy and other Western values remain familiar. It is difficult for a society that prides itself on its respect for other people's rights, and a preference for reason and law over violence, to explain why it is justified in having its way by force to make "them" like "us," other than to pronounce the certainty of its rectitude and practical necessity. Such arguments rebound readily.

Today, the sort of democratic deficit characteristic of the Raj would be grounds for international censure and condemnation in the United Nations (UN). Yet, ironically, the UN itself is an extreme example of such a democratic deficit, tolerated only because of its unique utility. The UN is the primary agency for legitimizing international military intervention, and it has ruled or has sanctioned the rule by others of many occupied territories. On the other hand, its accountability to numerous governments of sometimes in-



compatible ideological outlook makes its ability to reach rapid decisions modest compared to that of the Raj.

The UN is not democratic in any meaningful sense. Its member-nations enjoy equal voting rights irrespective of the size of their populations, and its decision-making process is rigged to ensure that the few most powerful, those on the Security Council, enjoy a veto to thwart the will of the majority if they feel so inclined. Were a state to be run on such undemocratic principles, it would be criticized for violating human and democratic rights.

Many pragmatic justifications are offered to explain why such power-politics should subvert Western democratic principles, and why the larger number of poor and weak are not to exercise a share in global governance commensurate with their numbers, not least that their interests would not be well-served by such developments. This was also the rationale of undemocratic rule by the Raj—good rule by the more developed is better than self-rule. In the case of the UN, its rule has not always been good,<sup>133</sup> perhaps only better than the available alternatives.

## 2. The Legacy of Democracy

The Raj is criticized for having been undemocratic and tyrannical, especially by those who live in the independent countries that have emerged from it. Some remain democratic thanks only to their once having been a part of the British Empire, but many newly independent colonies disposed of democracy soon after independence. Ironically, absence of democracy today is often seen as a legacy of the Empire, even though the modern states in question had no tradition of democracy in any Western sense before the British Empire ruled and, in most cases, created them.

The British Empire's greatest gifts to the world were arguably the concept of a loyal opposition, freedom of speech, individual liberty, and the model of Westminster democracy, of one man one vote, which their subjects were invited to adopt on being

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133 The UN was reported to have angered Human Rights lawyers by refusing to release details of the charges of human-trafficking faced by its personnel in Kosovo, the sort of offenses that the UN and its Human Rights agenda condemn. UN personnel have apparently been granted immunity from prosecution; an immunity that smacks of the old extra-territoriality beloved of imperialists to protect themselves. Jansson (2005). Over 150 peacekeepers have reportedly been dismissed for sexual abuse in Congo and West Africa, and the UN has been accused of a "culture of dismissiveness." *Economist*, 4 March 2006, p. 62.

granted independence. Many states declined, or rather their people were deprived of this opportunity by the Kleptocracies that seized control and soon created one-party states. L.F. Kaplan<sup>134</sup> has pointed out that two prevalent factors in whether a modern state is a democracy or not are (1) whether it was ever a part of the British Empire or (2) conquered by the US military—an imperial experience of another sort.

Many in a democratic West have sought to avoid accusations of post-colonial patronizing by patronizing in a more damaging way. They have been complicit in agreeing that local tyrannies are the formula by which the deeper democratic feelings of the people have always been expressed. In Africa, one-party rule has often been described as a “traditional form of democracy,” reflecting the true culture of the people. Such rule is certainly traditional and may even suit some, but it is sophistry to call it democratic in any way meaningful to the Western concept.

Of the Raj, a large part managed to adopt and maintain democracy against the odds, and despite some troubling challenges, Indian democracy now has such depth and stability that it can be regarded as the greatest of Britain’s nation-building achievements. No Indian can be expected to celebrate the occupation of his country for up to 200 years, or the fact that his country and system of government were in many respects the invention of a foreign culture. Yet, Indians do celebrate these aspects of their identity, often expressed through their unifying national language, English. At the same time, they have preserved what is arguably the most successful civilization on earth, in the sense that the Hindu culture of its majority has endured essentially unchanged for thousands of years, while accommodating various re-arrangements to the less-important material aspects of life.

### 3. The Ingredients for Success

Those seeking to conduct nation-building operations will be fortunate if they can stabilize as large a terrain as India and its people as effectively as the British did, train a local armed force to support them as loyally, and do so at virtually no cost to their own taxpayers. Should any element of this symbiotic security-economic model fail, the neces-

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134 Kaplan cited the principal reasons for freedom around the world: Tolerant cultural traditions, British colonization, international pressure, and American military occupation and political influence. Kaplan (2001).

sary support of the domestic population, in whose name and at whose electoral will it is executed, may be found wanting.

The British Empire's investment in people was contingent upon the expectation, or rather the certainty, that this particular task would go on. It was not comparable to a shift in some staff college curriculum in the light of last year's experience in some new theater of operations, with another shift around the corner as the focus of national attention moves elsewhere.

Nation-building of this ilk required a large body of individuals with a breadth of expertise across the full range of political, military, economic, social, and cultural life. They required the individual and collective motivation to leave home and to risk death and disease in a foreign country, often for little remuneration. They required a corporate ethos, mutual understanding and loyalty to the enterprise and to each other that would sustain them in hardship, and be a reward in itself. Their expertise had to be deep as well as broad, and they were the product of a necessary system of recruitment and training from the most influential strata of society.

Today, in most Western societies, that social group would probably prefer banking or corporate life to government service. The "market" could be rigged to redress the balance by making public service more remunerative, but the results of that would likely be disappointing by historic standards. A cadre of people guided by other less mercenary motives would be preferable, but that is no argument for penalizing them financially. Today, much of what would once have been characterized as imperial public service would be contracted out; but it seems unlikely that those employed on short-term commercial contracts would be armed with all of the qualities of the often derided ICS.

If suitable talent cannot be attracted, albeit in a way accommodating a new age and circumstances, is an undertaking that may require endurance, perseverance, resources, and massive self-confidence possible? If not, is it too dangerous and myopically optimistic to embark on such a risky and necessarily brief venture?

The requirement for cultural knowledge to shape operations in Iraq was noted by Andrew Krepinevich, who correctly cited the challenge of creating a coalition out of the roughly 150 tribes of Iraq. It "would require systematically mapping tribal structures, loyalties and blood feuds within and among tribal groups; identifying unresolved feuds; detecting the political inclinations of dominant tribes and their sources of power and le-

gitimacy; and determining their ties to tribes in other countries, particularly in Iran, Syria and Turkey.”<sup>135</sup> He nicely typifies the basic task of any Colonial Officer and his colleagues over many decades.

It is thus questionable whether the institutions of a Western state today are able to develop the expertise in depth and breadth that is desirable when any long-term commitment is in doubt. Can the US, for example—if it is an “empire of ideas” rather than territorial occupation with no great overseas Diaspora to underpin its cultural information, understanding, and intelligence—truly develop an appreciation and even an affinity for those territories it may choose to occupy or garrison from time to time? The Americans who do reside abroad are unlikely to see this as their necessary responsibility.

The US does have great reservoirs of stored knowledge in its government institutions, universities, and corporations; information that can be converted into intelligence and understanding; and which could foster an appreciation and affinity for those they seek to change. Has that been, or can it be, “down-loaded” into the minds of “Doers” for synthesis in future nation-building ventures; and who are those “Doers”? Do they want to act, and will others support them or let them do so? Is there some motivated stratum or faction of society capable of becoming such a corps?

The Raj was only ever 1,000 assassinations away from being ungovernable, and in practice a small fraction of such action would have sufficed. Had insurgents mounted even a half-hearted campaign to kill the few vulnerable, isolated British who ruled them, their families, and the engineers and businessmen who were building India’s infrastructure, the Raj would almost immediately have become an expensive lost cause. There were occasional incidents, but the evidence is that in practice, if not by electoral mandate, the British ruled India by consent.

By contrast, it is the insurgency in Iraq that has done much to make the rule of the Coalition and its Iraqi successors so difficult, separating those who would rule from their subjects. Larry Diamond reported how those administrators cooped up in the Green Zone of Baghdad had almost no contact with the countryside they were governing.<sup>136</sup>

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135 Krepinevich (2005), p. 99.

136 Diamond (2005). In the Green Zone, the delusion and group-think that some believe led to so many mistakes was apparently termed “drinking the Kool-Aid,” a reference to the Jonestown mass-suicide

The tour-length for a Green Zone employee was apparently often 90 days, encouraging Iraqis to wait for a decision they didn't like to leave with its instigator.

Of course there is no long-term, massive nation-building project in Iraq comparable to that of the Raj, and the "end of history" is not yet here; but some in the West, especially the US, do believe that there is an unfinished story that will end with others accepting Western values, induced both by force and by example. The ways and means by which any such conviction and end might be realized are far from clear. The example of the Raj nevertheless stands out as a unique success in nation-building and that experience may inform any future ventures of a humbler sort.

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of 1978 when loyal acolytes of the psychotic cult-figure Jim Jones willingly drank poison-laced refreshments. Leonard (2006), p. 26.

## IV. Case History Two: Sierra Leone. Pessimism

Abolitionism was arguably the world's first Human Rights movement claiming a universal application to all of mankind, recognizing no qualifications of race, religion, class, gender or wealth; and it was one to be promoted by force by the global super-power of the day. In this respect, the ideal went beyond the aspirations of the Founding Fathers of the US or the Revolutionaries of France. Its moral manifesto lies at the heart of those tenets of Human Rights that form the basis for today's military interventionism.

Abolitionism was the driving force behind Britain's first great altruistic nation-building venture, the creation of Sierra Leone. The history of that country has tested the moral strength of the humanitarian proposition upon which it was founded, and Britain's resolve to back it. From 1780 to 2000, the fundamentals of British nation-building in Sierra Leone and military support for it changed little.

Sierra Leone is not on the fault lines between any great ideologies or races, neither is it cursed in geo-political terms like Flanders or the Middle East. There are religious differences, but these have tended not to be the cause of conflict. It has ample mineral and agrarian resources that should enable its people to prosper, other things being equal, and these are not the source of anxious dependency for any great power tempted to take them for itself.

The factors that have blighted the potential success of Sierra Leone as a nation are more fundamental. Its fate 200 years later, despite an ostensibly promising start, also offers pessimistic insights into whether nation-building of this sort has any hope of succeeding in the long-term, a striking contrast to that of the Raj. It makes for instructive and uncomfortable study.

## A. Birth of a Nation (1)

### 1. Idealistic Origins

Sierra Leone was founded by the British after the American War of Independence as a Utopian settlement for slaves who had sided with the British and gained their freedom as a consequence. Freed slaves walked under an arch inscribed “Freed from Slavery by British Valour and Philanthropy.” Their new home was to be called “The Land of Freedom,” and their freedoms were to be protected unilaterally by the Royal Navy, according to the moral temper of British society and those who were shaping its new mood. Sierra Leone was to contribute to the universal ending of slavery by “civilization, Christianity and the cultivation of the soil.”<sup>137</sup>

Today, one can answer a newspaper advertisement and pay to save the eyesight of a sufferer in the Third World, or pay for a child to be educated and receive a regular report on that protégé’s progress. In 1808, a far greater prize could be bought—the salvation of a man’s soul. A well-meaning Briton could subscribe £5 and have a freed slave baptized with their name.

The pragmatic motive of resettling loyal black soldiers and their families was at one with that of the growing Abolitionist movement in Britain, where the argument against slavery had essentially been won intellectually and legally.<sup>138</sup> The assertion of the rights of man was sharpened by a deep sense of guilt, and a determination to make restitution in some way to the victims. It was also driven by a resolve not to return the thousands of freed slaves in the British-held ports of New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston to the American forces, despite the clause of the Treaty of Paris inserted at George Washington’s insistence that every slave would be returned to his master.<sup>139</sup>

Setting up a nation of freed slaves in Africa would satisfy the political, moral, and Utopian inclinations of the day. It was literally a nation-building project, starting from nothing, and it faced massive challenges. The settlement on the “Slave Coast,” from

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137 Morris (1979a), p. 45.

138 Whatever his opinion on the legality of slavery in general, Lord Chief Justice Mansfield’s judgment of June 1772 in effect was taken to mean that all men had the same inalienable rights to personal freedom as any Englishman believed himself to possess.

139 According to the new draft of 30 November 1782, the British were to withdraw “without...carrying away American property, Negroes &...”. Schama (2005), p. 137.

whence many of its pioneers originated, was more at the instigation of wealthy patrons and charitable organizations than the direction of the British Government, which nonetheless consented to the project and was induced to finance it.<sup>140</sup>

Sierra Leone was primarily the brain-child of three eccentric individuals. It was Henry Smeathman, a naturalist who recommended the terrain, flora and fauna of Sierra Leone as suitable for a new settlement of emancipation: “I contemplate the years which I passed in that terrestrial Elysium as the happiest of my life.”<sup>141</sup> He was lucky not to have died of malaria, and his happiness was no doubt in part thanks to his two new African wives. He could not think of his “Africa Plan” “without a sort of delirium.”<sup>142</sup> He hoped to finance his plan with the proceeds of his novel hot-air-balloon technology.

Jonas Hanway was a philanthropist interested in paving and ventilation, but he was also a militant critic of the habit of keeping pets and the use of ostrich feathers in ladies’ fashion. He was a pioneer of the use of the umbrella and the redemption of prostitutes, and he was a veteran campaigner against the drinking of tea. He also espoused a cause regarded by many at the time as equally absurd, the relief of London’s poor blacks. The most visible of these were freed slaves, become British soldiers, veterans of the American War of Independence, begging on the streets of London. Hanway was well-connected and received some financial support from society figures including the Prime Minister. It was these displaced veterans from London, but also from Nova Scotia, who would form the backbone of the settlement.

The chief instigator of the settlement was Granville Sharp, a businessman who believed that “Frankpledge,” the Anglo-Saxon tithing system, had its origins among the Israelites and was the model for an ideal society. He believed that the sanctity of the ancient freedoms of the Anglo-Saxons had been taken by Englishmen to North America

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140 The Plan of Settlement was briefed to the Lords of the Treasury in 1786. The Comptroller of the Royal Navy, Sir Charles Middleton, whose cooperation was so vital, was the patron of leading Abolitionists, including William Wilberforce.

141 Hochschild (2006), p. 145. The idea of Africa as liberating in its primitivism, an innocent “Eden,” has persisted. Graham Greene’s motives for travelling in Sierra Leone and Liberia in 1935 in pursuit of “a sense of warm and sleepy beauty...the life one was born to live” are described by Paul Theroux in his introduction to *Journey without Maps*, Greene (2006), p. xviii. The attraction is more complex, however, and Greene himself confides that “A quality of darkness is needed, of the inexplicable.” Greene (2006), p.17.

142 Hochschild (2006), p. 145.



and were to apply equally to the King's subjects of all races—white, black, and indigenous—there was an indivisibility of “British freedom.” These notions have done much to shape the concept of Human Rights in the English-speaking world.

Granville Sharp was alone in his time for speaking of a self-governing black community ruled by the will of its majority, in which fines would be paid according to means and prisoners would be entitled to conjugal visits. He would see all children educated and abolish the death penalty. He was to insist that half of every jury should be of the same race as the defendant and that affirmative action should be taken in the employment of blacks. Unlike European settlements in North America, this one, Sierra Leone, must be established with the consent of the natives.

The land for the settlement may have been paid for, but other inhabitants of the region were far from sympathetic to the Human Rights that the British sought to bring with their strange human plantation. Slavery was a part of the local culture and this settlement was seen as a threat to the local political interests and the economy of the Temme rulers like King Jimmy.<sup>143</sup> Under the pressures of subsequent events, some of the freed slaves themselves took up slave-trading.<sup>144</sup>

The settlers clearly had a keen idea of being free, but most lacked the education or the same understanding of the Utopian vision of Government that their patrons nurtured. The citizens of the country being built lacked the cultural tools, social structures, and experience of government institutions to underpin their country, and their freedom. Government had increasingly to be guided or controlled by others, and the Utopian dream faded.

## 2. Constitutional and Economic Viability

The dream of a free black settlement and society was indeed a radical one. For example, the country's currency was to be units of public labor. The constitution was equally unusual and contentious, and the rights of the people versus the Government soon be-

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143 There was even disagreement over whether local rulers had sold land or merely the right to occupy it. On 27 December 1789, King Jimmy burned Granville Town, on which the Province of Freedom was based.

144 Harry de Mane took up slave-trading in 1787 to the horror of Granville Sharp, who had freed him the previous year.

came confused. Arguments raged about whether a council of the people should be overthrown by a virtuous governor, to prevent its corrupt practices; and the people came to complain about their lost freedoms they had proven unfit to exercise responsibly.

Above all, the settlement was not self-sufficient. Utopian dreams can survive on subsidy, but their independence is then a sham; and besides, philanthropists in London were reluctant to provide a continuous subsidy to what seemed a dysfunctional arrangement. These charitable individuals and societies were the NGOs of their day, and they came to realize that aid needed to assist self-sufficiency, not to shore up current consumption and corruption—a theme that has remained at the heart of development theory. Some more conventional patrons were not prepared to see their benefactions destroyed by quirky social experiments.

Practical men recognized that private business was required to stimulate the economy if it was to be truly independent. A company was accordingly set up in July 1791, the St. George's Bay Company, succeeded by the Sierra Leone Company, to make the settlement more productive. Investors demanded a say in the way the settlement was run and its government was soon placed in the Company's hands. The Sierra Leone Company had benevolent intentions—William Wilberforce's cousin was its first chairman—yet even so, the Evangelicals and Quakers who had financed the settlement to date feared that “Anglo-Saxon” freedoms had been sold out to commercial interests.

Inevitably there soon followed complaints about corruption by officials of the company in Sierra Leone and their abuse of their positions of advantage over the settlers. There were disputes about whether the company or the people had the right to tax; whether the people should control company assets and investments rather than the shareholders, and who should control the police force that protected people and property.

Matters were simplified in November 1796, when the settlement received a new royal charter. The experiment in black self-government and residual Utopian novelties was ended and replaced by a standard form of colonial rule from London. In 1808, the Company was dissolved.

### 3. Security

There were also security setbacks. In 1794, the colony was attacked and plundered by the French Navy and the world witnessed the novelty of veteran black British officers commanding white troops.

In 1796, an insurrection had to be suppressed by the Royal Navy, and in 1801 and 1802 some rebels who had gone to live with the Temme King, returned to attack Freetown. They were defeated by the warlike Maroons, former slaves whom the British had brought from Jamaica. These men had a stake in defending their new homes and proved highly effective.

Slavery continued in the Gallinas River estuary neighboring Sierra Leone, and the British resolved to stamp it out. They found an excuse to do so in October 1840 following the kidnapping of Mrs. Fry Norman. The force of three ships that rescued her was led by Commander Joseph Denman RN, the son of Lord Chief Justice Denman, a distinguished Abolitionist.

He was typical of the highly motivated men who used British military power in the 19th century to pursue policies based on their own liberal idealism, which also expanded British dominion and *Pax Britannica*. There could be no doubt among the British public that it was embarked on a noble cause, if only because the character of their opponents was so obviously “evil” by the standards of the day. The Royal Navy liberated 150,000 slaves in the early 19th century, but the trade did not die until the American Civil War settled the matter.<sup>145</sup>

Denman had no mandate to attack on the Gallinas, but acted on his own, routing the enemy, freeing Mrs. Norman and ending the slave trade in the region. His initiative was strikingly similar to that of another British commander, Brigadier David Richards, 60 years later. Denman’s action was resented by the slave traders whom he had dispossessed, and they sought redress, not with the sword but through the law courts. Denman was sued for trespass and seizure of property (slaves); but the judges of the Court of Exchequer, friends of Denman’s father, directed the jury to clear him.

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145 The Royal Navy’s ships carried slavery manuals until 1970.

The British had arrogated to themselves the role of guardians of the global peace and the right to intervene on humanitarian grounds, while others responded with the sword and litigation. Frank Brayne's cousin, Lord Frederick Lugard, later observed that "The African knows no peace...The *Pax Britannica* which shall stop this lawless raiding and constant inter-tribal war will be the greatest blessing that Africa has known since the Flood."<sup>146</sup> Britain continued to provide security, but in 1869, it was hotly debated whether two warships off the coast of West Africa could compensate for the withdrawal of ground troops. Sierra Leone was but one element in what was regarded as a common security concern along the whole British West African coast.

Events soon seemed to suggest that warships poised off the coast could not secure interests ashore. "Boots on the ground" were required. In 1874, the British mounted an expeditionary operation against the Ashanti<sup>147</sup> following the taking of European prisoners by King Kofi Kakari. The prisoners were released and the Ashanti were subdued after their capital had been taken.

#### 4. Personal Commitment

Denman's actions were characteristic of his kind, but Europeans suffered a terrifying mortality rate on the west coast of Africa. It was hard to find ambitious men prepared to risk their health and to devote their lives for little reward to help make Sierra Leone a success. It was a poor career prospect. Sierra Leone was well-ruled, but the Colonial Office never produced men of the caliber of the India Office. Those who did serve in the colony suffered great hardship and stayed out of a sense of idealistic duty.

The black settlers had little understanding of how to form a viable state, but they quite clearly understood and championed their own liberty. They also produced men of leadership. Thomas Peters, who had been a sergeant in the British Army during the war in America, was arguably the first African-American political leader, although he has not been acknowledged as such. His strength of character saved the settlement in its early days. As the original settlers floundered, it was he who contacted his former commanding officer, General Sir Henry Clinton, who arranged an audience with the Home Secre-

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<sup>146</sup> Quoted in Bergner (2004), p. 89.

<sup>147</sup> A comparison between the Ashanti expedition and that to Sierra Leone in 2000 is drawn by Gwyn Prins in Prins (2002), pp. 181–86.

tary and a meeting with MPs in the House of Commons. It was he who led the second wave of settlers that saved the colony.

## 5. Progress

Despite its problems, by October 1792, the colony's capital of Freetown was a free British community of former African-Americans. Streets had been built, it had a school and a church, and the economy had begun to prosper under its Governor, John Clarkson.

British policy towards the colony was rooted in the Abolitionist cause which continued to sustain it. Newly freed slaves poured in to populate the country and steady progress was made in all aspects of society. It was supported by the Colonial Under-Secretary 1836–47, Sir James Stephen, who broke the Sabbath only twice, once to draw up the Abolition Bill of 1833.

Sierra Leone was always an implanted society, not native to the region. It had British resonances and the native-born settlers, called Creoles, adopted British ways, looking down on the natives. They wore European dress, developed their own version of English, Krio, into which Shakespeare was translated. Freetown was laid out on a grid system and its architecture was Georgian and the furniture also British. In time, there was an Anglican cathedral; but none of this was indigenous.<sup>148</sup>

The British aimed to create a prosperous and educated local bourgeois society that could sustain its own transplanted “respectability” and values. The founding of Fourah Bay College was to be the means of perpetuating that rock of society. It produced lawyers, civil servants, teachers, and clergy. Sierra Leone provided the first black Anglican bishop and the British Army's first black doctor. Many of the college's graduates became wealthy entrepreneurs. Samuel Lewis, son of a captured Yoruba tribesman, became an attorney and was knighted by Queen Victoria. In 1892, half the colony's administrators were Sierra Leoneans.

Sierra Leone's first experience of independence in the 1790s had failed and it had been ruled from London; but by 1860, a higher percentage of Sierra Leonean children

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148 Graham Greene saw this mimicking of European civilization to be incongruous and reprehensible. “They wore uniforms, occupied official positions, went to parties...had the vote, but they knew all the time they were funny (oh, those peals of laughter!), funny to the heartless eye of the white man. If they had been slaves they would have had more dignity...the more desperately they tried to regain their dignity the funnier they became.” Greene (2006), p. 35.

went to school than did British children. By 1962, the country probably had a higher per capita income than Hong Kong. It had an educated middle-class and many natural resources. It seemed a prime candidate for early independence given the “wind of change” blowing across Africa. It would surely set an example to others.

## B. Birth of a Nation (2)

### 1. The Beacon for Independent Africa

On 27 April 1961, the British Government declared that independence would see the fulfillment of Britain’s policy of enabling, “...the people to build up new nations capable of making their own way in the world.”<sup>149</sup> Its transition to independence, despite the champing of those reluctant to wait, passed relatively peacefully.

All was calm for three years; democracy failed after six and was followed by 29 years of dictatorship. Ministers pocketed the proceeds of the diamond mines, and the government managed to raise only minimal revenues. It lived off international aid and civil servants looted their own offices. The discipline of the Army was lost, its soldiers were unpaid and made their own arrangements. By 1990, the colonial bequest of good schools, roads, and electricity supply was gone.

Yet its idealistic roots were still evident in its worship. Even in the 1970s, Evangelical Christianity was in robust health with 65 churches in Freetown for just 128,000 inhabitants. For a time there was little sign of the rot that had set in. Rather, the country seemed pleasingly quaint and old-fashioned, and optimistic missionaries were still well in evidence.

In 1982, British troop ships sailing to the Falklands War stopped to take on fresh rations at Freetown, but it was deemed unsafe to let troops go ashore for recreation. Airlines were still prepared to land at Freetown in the 1980s, but behind the scenes the country’s infrastructure was falling apart. The once admirable school system was failing as money ran out, and it was only the privileged who could secure a place for their children, an inequality resented all the more by a society so schooled in the merits of education.

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149 British Government publication *Sierra Leone: The Making of a Nation*, quoted in Bergner (2004), p. 29.

The Government maintained a large state bureaucracy, valued as a means of political patronage, but there was little wealth being generated to pay for it.<sup>150</sup> This apparatus of a modern state had become a millstone around its neck. Many saw Freetown and its state employees as spending the wealth, such as it was, generated by the mineral resources of the interior. The conflict seemed at times to be between the culture of the city and the coast on one side, and the rural, mining interior on the other. Sierra Leone was a seriously failing state.

## 2. Humanitarian Intervention

In March 1991, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) under Foday Sankoh entered Sierra Leone from Liberia.<sup>151</sup> Sankoh had a political agenda to end the one-party state, but any good intentions were discredited by the violent campaign of the RUF that conscripted child soldiers and mutilated many, merely, so it seemed, to create an atmosphere of terror.<sup>152</sup> Meanwhile, the National Provisional Ruling Council overthrew President Momoh in April 1992 and appointed Valentine Strasser its leader.

In February 1994, Robert Kaplan described the situation in Sierra Leone in an article in *Atlantic Monthly* as the epitome of “The coming anarchy,” and suddenly the world began to notice the country’s agony. From 1996–98, Sierra Leone was named by the UN as the worst place on earth to live. Could such a broken country be salvaged by an international intervention? Any hope that the UN could succeed in this were soon to be dashed.

By 1994, the RUF had seized most of the diamond fields and over-run the bauxite and titanium mines, depriving Strasser of income. He clung to power with help from a private company, Executive Outcomes, and quasi-religious forest hunters, the Kamajors; but

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150 One idealistic but disillusioned American Peace Corps volunteer serving in West Africa in the 1960s complained that, “There is no Puritan work ethic here—there never has been...I suppose there are thoughtful students there, but I can honestly say that so far I have met none.” Quoted in Fischer (1998), p. 167. Frank Brayne of the ICS would have understood the complaint.

151 The then-President of Liberia, Charles Taylor, faced criminal charges in 2006 before a court in Sierra Leone.

152 In 1998, Krjn Peters and Paul Richards made a study of Sierra Leone’s child-soldiers, noting their military utility and their loyalty to their new comrades. See Meredith (2005), p.563. Colonel Richard Iron of the British Army has noted that “hearts and minds” counted for little in guerrilla thinking. The priority was establishing an atmosphere of terror, but above all maintaining cohesion within the group. Interview with author, 23rd July 2006.

was deposed in January 1996. Ahmad Kabbah won a democratic election and reached an uneasy accommodation with Sankoh, who nonetheless was bent on ousting him.

In May 1997, Kabbah fled to Guinea following a coup by the Sierra Leone military under Johnny Koroma and his Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC). The AFRC made a deal with the RUF, that now ruled in Freetown; but opponents of the coup and the Kamajors continued to fight from the jungle against both.

The UN mandated the Economic Organization of West African States (ECOMOG) to restore the democratically elected President Kabbah to power, and from September–October 1997, Nigerian armed forces attacked Freetown; but their behavior seemed to some to be little better than that of the rebels. Attempts at Conakry to reach a settlement, which would have given Koroma immunity and Sankoh a role in government, failed. In February 1998, ECOMOG overthrew Koroma and his AFRC/RUF government, reinstating Kabbah in March 1998.

The RUF did not give up, and their war with ECOMOG and its mercenary and Kamajor allies continued for a year, with atrocities by many. In January 1999, the RUF invaded Freetown, killing 300 policemen, massacring about 6,000 civilians, and committing many other outrages. The RUF forced thousands to kill or mutilate members of their own families. Babies' limbs were amputated, there was mass public rape on the streets of Freetown and widespread destruction. Children were abducted to become soldiers in rebel forces, often with initiation rites involving cannibalism. Much of this was reported in the international press and noted by an alarmed Western public opinion increasingly sensitive to atrocity following the horrors of events in Rwanda and at Srebrenica.

Many aid workers and Human Rights activists would tell journalists, off the record, that contrary to what they would wish, they had become convinced that recolonization was the only hope for Sierra Leone.

The international community, including the British, appeared to be more interested in some form of peace than in taking sides, and a deal was struck at Lomé on 7 July 1999. The agreement stopped the fighting, but seemed to give the rebels, Sankoh and Koroma, a role and status that undermined the democratically-elected Kabbah. Sankoh, regarded as one of the most blatant Human Rights offenders in the world, was made Deputy Prime Minister. He was given responsibility for the revenues of the diamond mines, and his armed forces were in effect granted an amnesty for all offenses since



1991. The pragmatic desire for peace had undermined the principles of democracy, Human Rights, and accountability.

On 22 October 1999, UNSC Resolution 1270 authorized the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) to oversee implementing the Lomé agreement. UNAMSIL saw its role as one of neutrality between the parties to the agreement, in keeping with its understanding of the doctrine of the day which required impartiality—something rather different.

By May 1999, the RUF's forces were close to Freetown, apparently intent on bringing down Kabbah. The UNAMSIL forces of about 10,000 remained largely impassive, and impartiality seemed to have become appeasement and even capitulation. The RUF became ever more assertive and attacked UNAMSIL, taking hundreds prisoner and capturing numerous armored vehicles and other equipment.

At that point the UN asked the UK to act. The British did, but insisted on doing so under national command, rather than that of the UN. Confusingly, the UN arms embargo prohibited the supply of arms to the Sierra Leone Government as well as to the RUF that was now attacking it.<sup>153</sup>

### 3. Mission Creep or Mission Evolution?

The British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, declared that Britain's foreign and defense policy in Africa was rooted in morality rather than strategic self-interest. The British Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, made much of the claim that Britain would now follow an "ethical foreign policy," not one based merely on national self-interest. His thoughts on humanitarian intervention echoed the statements of Kofi Annan in 1988<sup>154</sup> and were in keeping with the justification of NATO's intervention in Kosovo in 1999. This was, however, to be a national mission and at the request of the democratically-elected government of Sierra Leone, rather than an armed intervention.

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153 The lack of flexibility of UN embargoes was evident again in Kosovo in 1999. The UN government of Kosovo, UNMIK, was seriously handicapped in its efforts to reactivate the economy by a shortage of fuel caused by the UN's own fuel embargo that remained in place even after UNMIK had taken control of the province.

154 See below.

After a reconnaissance by the commander, Brigadier David Richards, in January 2000, the British force deployed to Sierra Leone on OPERATION PALLISER on 6 May 2000, on a mission that was to last just more than one month.

The mission was a purely Non-Combatant Evacuation Operation (NEO) one; there was no authority to pursue any broader agenda, let alone one of nation-building. It was clear, however, that the security of the troops conducting the NEO could not be achieved without military operations to hold airheads, possible ports of embarkation, and the route linking them around Freetown. Although the British Government had not sanctioned it, there was also a will in the force, confronted with the humanitarian horror that had befallen this small state, to do something about it. The commander noted the small children who cheered his arrival, waving the stumps of their missing arms at him. Other children asked when their arms would grow again.

In practice, political-strategic control soon shifted to the commander on the ground. The direction of the mission and the initiative now lay with him, but the case to expand the mission was trumpeted in a lively campaign by the media that eloquently demanded that the British Government should do more to curb the horrors they reported daily. A British Government that had made much play with the idea of operations in the name of principle could but go along with events on the ground, where local and timely knowledge favored the commander's judgment. The British Government soon followed the lead from theater and has since come to bask in some of the glory from operations not of its original intent.

Operations of the force on the ground created new situations requiring the Government to decide to enlarge the force,<sup>155</sup> making further options possible on the ground, creating a spiral of unforeseen decisions—led by the force commander. The perils of “mission creep” have often been articulated, but seldom the benefits of “mission evolution,” directed by the man on the ground most familiar with the conditions. Such a model has important constitutional perils and complications, and it also relies upon the good judgment of a commander who understands the situation and what is within his power and competence. Perhaps “mission creep” is the term used for a phenomenon

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155 Brigadier Richard's force eventually comprised the aircraft carrier *HMS Illustrious*, bearing Harrier jets; a battalion of The Parachute Regiment; much of 22 SAS Regiment; and a Royal Marines Amphibious Ready Group based on *HMS Ocean* with numerous support ships.

when the evolution appropriate to a dynamic situation cannot be managed by those in command, and has not been sanctioned in advance by his superiors.

In May 2000, Brigadier Richards knew the key political actors from his earlier reconnaissance of January 2000, and took a different view to that of UNAMSIL. Fortunately, Bernard Miyet, Head of the UN's Department of Peacekeeping Operations and his military advisor, General Fraticelli, who were visiting at the time, agreed with Brigadier Richard's approach. The UN mission changed direction to support the democratically-elected government rather than remain neutral in the face of attacks upon it by rebels who flouted their own previous undertakings.

#### 4. Salutory Force

"Sway," prestige, "face," and at times bluff, have always played a major role in the ability to rule others. The British had been defeated in relatively small battles in the Indian sub-continent and Africa in the late 19th century, but these had generally been decisively avenged, if only to restore the "face" of the European. The Italians had suffered a disastrous defeat at the hands of the Abyssinians at Adowa in 1892, and this was deemed by the British to be a "moral" danger to their standing in their own empire. It was one reason for their decision in 1896 to re-conquer the Sudan from the Dervishes and thereby win an exemplary military victory at Omdurman two years later.

Tribal and religious ties remain powerful in Africa, and so too does respect for power. In perilous circumstances, people will tend to support those who offer them protection, and it may be wise to be seen to support whoever is "the chief." When the victory of Robert Mugabe in the Rhodesian elections of 1980 was announced, the paramilitary police, the British South Africa Police (BSAP), who had fought against him in a bush-war for seven years, cheered.<sup>156</sup>

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156 By 1979, the war in Rhodesia was not about whether the black majority could overthrow the rule of a white minority, it was about which black government would rule in its place. Mugabe's opponent, Bishop Muzorewa, understood the cultural sentiment. His own advertisements omitted reference to policy, merely urging "Vote for the Winner." Sadly for him, the majority thought that Mugabe would win and his "sway" prevailed. Even if Muzorewa had won, he probably would not have survived in the face of a renewed guerrilla war by Mugabe, who would not have accepted the result. In similar vein in Liberia in 1997, Charles Taylor's campaign slogan was, "He killed my ma, he killed my pa, but I will vote for him." The implied threat of what awaited those who did not was clear. Meredith (2005), p. 568.

If a small British force was to prevail in Sierra Leone, it was vital that all concerned believe it would indeed do so. Brigadier Richards patched together a force of allies, consisting of the remnants of the Sierra Leone Army, a gang called the West Side Boys, and the Kamajors hunter-cultists. There was no mandate or plan for costly offensives deep inside enemy jungle terrain, but the SAS conducted prudent “reconnaissance” well forward. Violent action, however, could have disproportionate benefits, as was evident after 17 May 2000 following a major fire-fight between British troops and rebels just north of Lungi airport. The local populace noted the imbalance in outcome and the reputation of the rebels was severely damaged. The British Government’s confidence also seemed to be shored up, and it agreed that more troops were required on the ground in case of further combat. Permission was given to land marines with their field artillery, all in deliberate view of the world’s media. The UN forces grew in confidence and also took more positive action against the RUF.

OPERATION PALLISER was further strengthened when the British Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, visited Sierra Leone on 7–8 June 2000. The accompanying press corps broadcast the enthusiastic pleadings of the local people for the British to stay and protect them. Ironically, the intervention had such a startlingly clear effect that the British force was able to withdraw shortly afterwards on 15 June, leaving behind just a small training team and a maritime presence “over the horizon.” The salutary use of force, the benefits of peace and stability, and the possibility of the British returning were emphasized in the psychological operations campaign which followed, although this was conducted more by the Sierra Leone Government than by the British. The operation had bought time to rebuild the Sierra Leone Army that was soon able to conduct its own operations effectively.

The lessons were reinforced in September when seven members of the British training mission were captured by the wild and unpredictable West Side Boys, which had

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The international community was delighted that a well-monitored election should place the most militarily dominant man in power, for it seemed to assure that the war would end through his dominance—it was of lesser concern that he was a Marxist who would use that power to create a one-party state and economy to match, and that he would soon punish the second largest ethnic group, the Matabele, with the help of the North Korean Army. The British were relieved that they could save “face,” wash their hands of the problem of rebel Rhodesia, and revel in a so-called triumph for democracy in Africa. After a deceptive pause while the foundations of mayhem were put in place, the descent thereafter was as precipitous as Sierra Leone’s.

now broken off its support for the government. OPERATION BARRAS on 9 September 2000 was a high-risk helicopter rescue mission.<sup>157</sup> It was extremely violent and successful, and it was made even more plain what would happen to those who interfered with Government forces, supported by the British.

Signs of an RUF revival were met by the redeployment of Brigadier Richards and another force between September and December 2000 on OPERATION SILKMAN. This was reinforced by another psychological operation with the message to the local population that the British would use great force against the RUF, and Tornado aircraft flew low and loud across the country.

In the case of Sierra Leone, the lesson seemed to be that nation-building in sub-Saharan Africa can be greatly helped by short and sharp military interventions by even small forces. Success in these will be more likely if they have the support of the government inviting them; have the support, or can earn the support, of the people who they have come to help; and the backing of domestic opinion in the West, which can be shaped by a supportive media. Success requires that the force conduct operations decisively, be led by commanders who understand more than merely their military trade, and who have the judgment to apply that understanding with enterprise and self-confidence.

## 5. Cultural Complexity

The point of principle may be clear, but the means of implementing it may be more complex. The baffling cocktail of forces, gangs, interests, exotic leaders, and unusual cultural practice has to be dealt with, sometimes by compromise rather than outright disapproval; but the judgment as to when, say, the West Side Gang should be allies and their actions condoned of necessity, and when they should be put down, is a fine distinction with no clear answer. It may also be that the British operation was not really as short as it seemed and had to take many forms over time, for the threat of intervention had to endure, deterring opponents of the Government by the belief that the will and ability to stop them existed.

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157 The prisoners were held at Gberi Bana, “Dark Angel West Side Niggaz,” where Colonel Cambodia hoped to exchange them for the gang’s own leader, Brigadier Bomb Blast.

## 6. Managing Western Taboos

The West may intervene as a matter of conscience on a matter of principle and meet with some success, but beneath this clarity, the West is racked by inner self-doubt and moral contradiction. Its own complexes and discomfort often hinder open debate and understanding. Paradoxical problems arise when post-colonial guilt and moral relativism meet a new moral certainty and an actual disparity of power and competence. The cocktail is not a happy one, touching on the West's own most sensitive taboos of race and history; and there are pressures to handle these a certain way, or not at all, for fear of the West's own domestic tensions.

The American writer Daniel Bergner played no official role in the affairs of Sierra Leone, but did act as an emotional witness to its tragedy. He reported the view of one British soldier, "This is taking care of what few liberal attitudes I brought. As soon as we go, it's all finished."<sup>158</sup> There lurks the suspicion that, despite everything, some deeper cultural currents will prevent "them" becoming like "us," in the sense that "they" will choose on their own to live in a society whose behavior meets the West's expectations. On the one hand, the multi-culturalists will assert that they must live as they wish, while on the other, the Neo-Victorians will assert that the universalism of Human Rights means that "they" must be made to abide by certain of "our" norms. The West is skewered by this intellectual dichotomy, which is not merely of academic interest, but of consequence for foreign policy and military action from south-east Asia, across the Hindu-Kush and Mesopotamia to southern Africa.

The British had made Sierra Leone an apparently Christian country, and its religious observance was perhaps even more overt than in Britain. In retrospect, this was perhaps as much a manifestation of a deep inclination of that society to religious belief as any for Christianity per se. With hindsight, Christianity may have been more a matter of appearance than substance, while other currents ran deeper through society.

In the 1790s, Sierra Leone was known for its witchcraft, and especially for its "leopard-men" of the forest who apparently stole young men and ate them in ritual initiations. In the 1890s, there was a notorious outbreak of "human leopardism" in up-country Sierra Leone that resulted in well-publicized trials. Members of the Human Leopard Society

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<sup>158</sup> Bergner (2004), p. 145.

donned leopard-skins and on certain nights were said to go out to capture, and eat young victims. The aim was not cannibalism per se but to gain strength and grace.<sup>159</sup>

Similar customs broke to the surface with a vengeance in the 1990s, as the RUF abducted children to fill their ranks and conducted similar initiations. Even the Deputy Defence Minister Hinga Norman was later charged with numerous offenses and accused of cannibalism.

Attempts to understand the nature of the problem are often suppressed because they appear to portray African society as primitive, and are therefore regarded as racist observations. Equally, a common view of those who practiced or believed in forest magic was resentment at what they saw as a racist blind skepticism, claiming that Westerners only want to believe what they see, whereas the locals see things that Westerners cannot see. In the Ashanti Wars, the King of the Ashanti went into battle covered in infallible ju-jus so dense that it was said his face was scarcely visible beneath the glued tufts of pubic hair and magic fragments. When, in 2000, British soldiers demonstrated that Commander Snake's magic jacket was not after all proof against high-velocity rifle fire, Snake observed that the presence of too many women had weakened its spiritual purity.

The clash of views between the outraged Briton and local custom is an age-old one. In 1874, General Sir Hope Grant maintained that it was "willed by the all-powerful Ruler above, that Africa shall be opened, and that these savage and inhuman tribes will be brought to reason, and their horrible iniquities put an end to. The poor wretched creatures at present know no better."<sup>160</sup>

These perceptions encouraged biased assumptions. Lieutenant General Sir Garnet Wolseley told his troops as they embarked on the Ashanti Campaign of 1874, "The black men hold you in superstitious awe: be cool, fire low, fire slow and charge home."<sup>161</sup> The racial assumptions went both ways, and over 100 years later, Bergner courageously dealt with a subject many sought to avoid. He attributed the self-confidence of the British in part to some sense of racial superiority that others seemed to accept. This appeared to account for much of their success. "The (British) Captain lifted his arms as though in benediction, his white hands spread high and wide. A thousand black soldiers knelt in

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159 Pope-Hennessey (2000), p. 31

160 Morris (1979a), p. 394.

161 Morris (1979a), p. 399.

the mud before him.”<sup>162</sup> Equally he noted the abject despair of many Sierra Leoneans at their condition, which they themselves claimed to be a result of their race. Bergner noted that, even though he could never agree to any such proposition, he could not help feeling it too. “It was inside me too. Out on patrol with the British, I felt that nothing could touch me.”<sup>163</sup> Others no doubt would regard any such racial perceptions on any side as part of the deeper problems that obstruct the healing of Africa’s problems.

On top of this problem of racial perceptions was the problem of colonial history. Britain’s record in Sierra Leone of all colonies was rooted in a benevolence which probably balanced any resentment at its colonial rule; but the British have had to be sensitive about any suggestion of neo-colonialism in Africa, for example in their approach to Mr. Mugabe’s regime in Zimbabwe. Equally, few Africans have found it in themselves to praise their colonial experience.<sup>164</sup>

Sierra Leone proved a troubling exception to these modern cultural and political conventions of blanket condemnation. Government ministers greeted British troops with, “Welcome back our colonial masters, are you here to set our country straight?”<sup>165</sup> A Sierra Leonean soldier explained, “They colonize us. They are our fathers. They know the job perfectly. They know how to discipline us.” Reflecting the tensions and taboos of his own Western culture, Daniel Bergner appealed for a sense of racial resentment and historical embitterment, but was told by his driver “...look at we—no light, no proper education, everything finished in Sierra Leone, you get me clear. When we ask independence, we can’t do it. We can do nothing here, only go down only spoil. End of the day we cry back for Britain to take back the country.”<sup>166</sup> The Deputy Defence Minister, Hinga Norman, maintained that, “You were in control of our nation. You left a nice arrangement, and eventually by ourselves we spoiled it. Please come again and help us.”<sup>167</sup> Colonel Richard Iron conducted perhaps 40 in-

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162 Bergner (2004), p. 1.

163 Bergner (2004), p. 94.

164 “Colonialism has led to racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and...Africans and people of African descent, the people of Asian descent and indigenous peoples were victims of colonialism and continue to be victims of its consequences.” Durban Declaration of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, 2001. Quoted in Ferguson (2002), p. xi.

165 Quoted in Bergner (2004), p. 2.

166 Quoted in Bergner (2004), pp. 2–3.

167 Quoted in Bergner (2004), p. 93.



interviews with former guerrillas between 2002–05, before the international war-crimes trials. He was asked much the same question by many even of these men, with puzzlement and disappointment, “How could you let us do this to ourselves for so long?”<sup>168</sup>

British intervention, welcomed or not, was a matter of shame for some. The Freetown lawyer and Human Rights activist, Abdul Tejan-Cole, remarked, “All our faith is in foreigners, in the British. My grandfather, who fought for independence, would be turning over in his grave.”<sup>169</sup> Others had no fondness for the British, but more damningly placed the blame on themselves and their culture, “The Blackman witchcraft, it only for spoil,” “I don’t know what it is, its in the skin.”<sup>170</sup> Such African views are not ones that a liberal West wants to hear, and though discussed elsewhere in the world are scarcely to be permitted in Western discourse, for this self-denigration offends some necessary Western precepts. Others opposed to the British operation in support of the Sierra Leone Government no doubt regarded it as arrogant, racist neo-colonialism.

## 7. Compromise. Vice or Virtue?

Once Kabbah was securely in power, it was important to enhance the effectiveness of the shattered Sierra Leonean armed forces; but many of its members had deserted and many had joined the various irregular armed bodies that had fought in Sierra Leone’s self-destruction. The British training team asked few questions of men seeking to join the new Sierra Leone Army, taking the view that investigations would create festering wounds when the priority was to heal them. Too many would be implicated or involved in prolonged enquiries that might delay rebuilding the country effectively. It was debatable whether all offenses should be investigated or whether legal action should be taken only against senior leaders and even then, which ones? If there were to be exceptions, would such pragmatism offend some sense of natural justice, the sense that had led to intervention in the first place?

Drawing a line under recent events was not the view of those who saw their task to be the investigation and prosecution of criminals. The Special Court set up to deal with crimes committed in Sierra Leone was the world’s first to be set up in the country where

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168 Colonel Iron, personal interview, 23 July 2006.

169 Quoted in Bergner (2004), pp. 92–93.

170 Quoted in Bergner (2004), p. 30.

those offenses were committed, what its chief prosecutor Desmond de Silva called “...evil beyond belief.”<sup>171</sup>

Yet, the “Human Rights industry” has also been accused of being too zealous, more interested in the relentless pursuit of suspects than the greater good of society as a whole. Legal action has to be seen to be justice, not revenge, and in conflicts like those in Sierra Leone, guilt is likely to accrue in many quarters. The legal and moral ambiguities were evident in the trial of Hinga Norman with a British general speaking in his defense and a British colonel speaking as a prosecution witness. Peter Penfold, the British High Commissioner to Sierra Leone 1997–2000, protested, “Surely there has to be a difference between a group of thugs and killers who go around butchering people mindlessly...and people trying to defend their lives, their homes and their children.” De Silva’s response was that, “You can fight on the same side of the angels and nevertheless commit crimes against humanity.”<sup>172</sup>

## 8. A Long-Term Solution to Africa’s Problems?

Contrary to the example of the Raj and other forced interventions, that of the British in Sierra Leone in 2000 was at the request of the legitimate, democratically-elected regime and there was a clear hunger of the people for better government and peace. The American, Corinne Dufka, collecting evidence for Human Rights Watch said, “This is a carcass of a state...this is a lawless society...it’s a moral garbage dump. Without the British the show is over.”<sup>173</sup>

That does not mean that the British operation will necessarily be seen as an enduring success in nation-building. The immediate horrors of mass amputations of children’s limbs and other outrages were halted by OPERATION PALLISER, but did that operation change anything in the long-term? Most British soldiers were touched by the misery of the people, were captivated by their charm, and angry at what had befallen them. They were no doubt proud of what they had achieved, but felt that the problems had only been temporarily salved, not solved. They compared their departure to “taking your hand out of a bucket of water.”<sup>174</sup>

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171 “Bringing the Wicked to the Dock,” *Economist*, p. 23.

172 *Economist*, p. 23.

173 Bergner (2004), pp. 149, 178.

174 Bergner (2004), p. 181.

Sierra Leone had many problems that made civil war likely and its democracy had many imperfections. Its people may crave peace and stability; but that is not the same as having the wherewithal to prosper as a self-sustaining democracy despite the high hopes at its independence, any more than it was in the 1790s when the Utopian dream of a successful self-governing black state collapsed and external rule was imposed.

Sierra Leone's problems are a microcosm of much of sub-Saharan Africa's. The moral of the story might well be that despite having every ground for optimism after 180 years of British rule, it still proved a disappointment, and one whose horrors could only be assuaged by brief military intervention by the former colonial power. The British, despite their imperial past, seemed a better bet to their erstwhile subjects than the UN, which otherwise purports to be the arbiter of international legitimacy and protection.

Intervention had many important and immediate benefits, but what fundamental has changed to give confidence of future progress? Like the early investors and philanthropists of the colony, the international community needs to find ways to make the country self-sustaining rather than mendicant. It is hard to see how the outside world can make a permanent difference to the plight of much of Africa when the problems seem so persistent, deep-rooted, and immutable.

Even when undemocratic rebel Rhodesia had the whole world against it and faced international trade sanctions, it still exported grain to the "front-line" states whom it was fighting, states that had called for those sanctions but who could no longer feed themselves. Today, a "free" and independent Zimbabwe's economy is wrecked and it is dependent on international food aid.<sup>175</sup> Under the regime they voted for in March 1980, facilitated by the West, the people do not seem to have received any greater political freedom, but their lives have been devastated in material terms. Zimbabwe's situation is not even the worst in the region. The afflictions of AIDS and high fuel prices compound the problems, and the systemic weakness of such states makes them even less able than most to cope with these challenges.

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175 Between 2000–06, the Zimbabwean Government appropriated 20 million acres of commercial farmland and gave it to its supporters. In 2006, 90% of that lay untilled and despite heavy rains the country needed to import half of its grain. This could not be bought with hard currency, for it was previous agricultural surpluses which had generated that hard currency. By 2006, Zimbabwe had the lowest life expectancy in the world.

The West faces dilemmas. Is it better to allow tyrannical rulers to devastate their people on the grounds that they are at least of their own people?—a rather racist proposition. Like the British in India, the West today has to decide at what point it finds what it sees as “barbarism” to be intolerable, if it has indeed given itself a mandate to act. The West does appear to apply a racial criterion to the acceptability of military intervention, shrinking from action it might otherwise take to alleviate suffering for fear of how its actions might be construed. It is hard for a “White” Government to intervene without consent, and it was perhaps only Tanzania that could have acted unilaterally to change the regime of Idi Amin in Uganda in 1979, for which it was widely praised. The UN flag, or sanction of say ECOMOG, overcomes many of such inhibitions, but the results have so far been disappointing.

It is hard enough for nations to decide whether they wish to commit their own blood and treasure to help others, and very often it will only be after an outrage has occurred that feelings will be sufficiently stirred to do so. Even if the matter seems clear, the West is caught in a dilemma, cautious of being labeled arrogant and neo-colonialist by those who have a vested interest in preventing their intervention, and being accused of indifference to the suffering of masses of Africans because they apply some difference in value to their suffering to, say, that of the people of the Balkans. The accusation of racism linked to indifference seems to weigh less heavily than the accusation of racism linked to neo-colonialism.

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## V. Case History Three: Kosovo. Incoherence

### A. The Path to the New Interventionism

Joseph Chamberlain maintained that “You cannot have omelets without breaking eggs; you cannot destroy the practices of barbarism, of slavery, of superstition...without the use of force.”<sup>176</sup> This Victorian proposition has once more become a popular dictum of Western foreign policy that has acted to change what it sees as distasteful regimes and to promote Human Rights and other Western values, if necessary by force of arms.

The West’s new “civilizing mission,” sometimes endorsed by the United Nations, sets the rights of the individual above those of the governments of sovereign states who may be denying them those rights. A.T. Mahan would no doubt have approved of the moral and legal validation of these operations, a validation said to extend to the right of nations to intervene unilaterally, and even sometimes preemptively, in support of higher good.

The genesis of the new policy coincided with the end of the Cold War, perhaps because great-power politics could no longer thwart it, but also because there was an optimism that a “New World Order” was possible. In *An Agenda for Peace*, then-Secretary-General of the UN, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, wrote that, “The time of absolute and exclusive sovereignty has passed.”<sup>177</sup> The first expression of this new mood had already been seen in OPERATION SAFE HAVEN in 1991 to protect the Kurds in Northern Iraq.

The new policy gestated on the “watch” of Britain’s Conservative Government and that of President Ronald Reagan. There was a new certainty about the value of Western democracy and free markets after decades when the advance of Communist and Socialist models had seemed to be almost inevitable. This more assertive approach to foreign policy was not, however, seen to be part of some new humanitarian agenda per se; it was as much a matter of power-politics and the fruits of victory in the Cold War.

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<sup>176</sup> Quoted in Ferguson, p. 185.

<sup>177</sup> United Nations, *Agenda for Peace*, section 1, paragraph 17.

It now seemed appropriate to spread Western values even to those states whose undemocratic regimes the West had often been complicit in propping up. It fell to President William Clinton and Mr. Blair to pursue a policy of intervention shorn of any accusation of being Cold War warriors—their predecessors had already won that war. Their cause was portrayed as altruistic, not one of aggressive self-interest.

Informed by the searing experiences of massacres in Rwanda and at Srebrenica, and responding to a public opinion that demanded that “something must be done,” a new “theology” was produced, based on existing precepts of Human Rights, to justify the action now to be taken.<sup>178</sup> This was supported by a broad spectrum of interests including NGOs, Human Rights activists, legal experts, and a willing media. This reflected, perhaps unconsciously, the complex constituencies and the moral self-confidence of thinking 100 years earlier when the West also determined simultaneously to expand its interests and to promote its values by suppressing “barbarism.” It is difficult to know if those who formulate such policies are conscious of the historical perspectives they excite—their instinct would very likely veer to denial.

In a lecture at Wilton Park in the UK in 1998, Kofi Annan unwittingly echoed A.T. Mahan, “The (UN) Charter protects the sovereignty of peoples. It was never meant as a license for governments to trample on Human Rights and human dignity. The fact that a conflict is “internal” does not give parties any right to disregard the most basic rules of human conduct...”<sup>179</sup> In this at least they are soul-mates.

This pronouncement seemed to set the scene for future “Mahanian intervention,” albeit with an international mandate. In 1999, at the UN General Assembly, Annan called on states to accept the necessity for intervention wherever civilians are threatened by war and mass slaughter. He invoked the principle of “rights beyond borders” and called for unity to ensure that massive and systematic violations of Human Rights—wherever they occur—should not be allowed to stand. He accepted that intervention should always be the last resort—but asserted that not to act when confronted with crimes against humanity was to be complicit in them.

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178 Current opinion on military intervention is very much in keeping with the old measures of *jus ad bellum*. It should apply proportionality, do more good than harm, be successful, and preserve the immunity of non-combatants.

179 Annan (1998).

Many wondered how far this new direction, away from the long-held primacy of the sovereign state, might go, and some saw in it the justification for a broader agenda to re-order the world, while others noted that it was precisely to prevent such ambitions that the old imperfect principle of state-sovereignty had been so tenaciously defended. Did such rights to intervene extend to any state on its own judgment, given that the consent of the UN was no longer required?

Humanitarian interventions have only been feasible once evidence becomes available of outrageous behavior, often when it is too late to stop it—in the words of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in situations that are “a shock to the conscience of mankind.” In 1994, even the warnings of the UN commander on the ground in Rwanda were insufficient to galvanize the international community into action. It was not until the Summer of 1995 that Major General Rupert Smith, the commander of UNPROFOR could use NATO airpower to halt the onslaught of the Bosnian Serbs.

An ill-defined line had to be crossed and outrages committed, endured, debated, and condemned before decisive counter-action could be taken. Humanitarian necessity was not the justification for the war in Iraq in 2003, although pre-empting Saddam Hussein’s future outrages was alluded to. Even events in Dafur in the Sudan have apparently not yet been shocking enough to galvanize humanitarian action, despite the urgings of many international leaders. The difficulties of pre-emptive humanitarian intervention have yet to be solved, but would be a major challenge to the international system, rather like arresting someone deemed a potential criminal before a crime has been committed.

NATO nations have undertaken Humanitarian interventions in cases where states have “failed,” but also against states that have abused other states or the rights of their people, for example in Bosnia in 1995 and in Kosovo in 1999. Scarred by memories of previous inaction, NATO acted with the threat of ground action to prevent the further abuse of Kosovo’s Albanians. The UN would not sanction intervention in Kosovo and only belatedly endorsed NATO’s unilateral intervention, but it was the Yugoslavs who insisted on a UN Resolution before they would concede the points of the Military Technical Agreement (MTA) at the Kumanovo negotiation in June 1999.



## B. Campaign Characteristics

### 1. Mission Creep

The Kosovo campaign saw the mission expand at the behest of the military, somewhat faster than NATO political decision-making would otherwise have moved. Some might even say that the military manipulated the politicians, who seemed unaware of how they were being led. If that were so, it would be understandable, but the constitutional and international implications of what happened have yet to be fully debated.

The military believed that action by ground forces would eventually be required and that any belated political decision would be followed by an inadequate period to prepare and deploy. The military therefore wished to deploy as many troops as possible to the region as early as possible under any credible pretext, even though the policy of not intervening with ground forces still stood.

NATO policy makers were persuaded to agree that NATO should deploy forces for the so-called “Tier Three” extraction mission, ready to rescue OSCE observers from Kosovo in hostile circumstances. This was acknowledged to be a militarily nonsensical mission with the forces available, but was supported as a means of getting NATO’s political agreement to deploy troops to Macedonia where they could act as enablers for a larger force to follow, although that force had yet to be authorized.

Once deployed, the “Tier Three” force was seen to be vulnerable to possible Yugoslav attack and the military called for a heavier force to reinforce them.<sup>180</sup> A larger force would require greater logistic and engineer support, and so on. Had that force been requested of NATO in the first instance, it would have probably not been forthcoming, given the policy of not intervening with ground forces. It was the deliberate incremental

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180 Such deliberate mission-creep is not uncommon in history. For example, General Kitchener’s mission in the Sudan in 1886 was originally confined to the northern province of Dongola. His mission was only expanded when he demonstrated he could succeed at minimal cost, and he campaigned for this in speeches in Cairo and London as Diamond Jubilee-fever mounted. Lord Salisbury remarked that Kitchener’s “campaign against the Chancellor of the Exchequer was not the least brilliant and certainly the most unexpected of his triumphs.” The Chancellor funded the construction of a 230-mile railway and 630 miles of telegraph lines, which along with other meticulous logistic planning played as great a part in victory as any developments in the technology of firepower. Spiers (1998), p. 13.

mission-creep under other pretexts that ensured that Kosovo Force (KFOR) was well-placed to negotiate the MTA and enter Kosovo at short notice.<sup>181</sup>

The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) also understood the “rules of the game” in precipitating NATO military action. The KLA saw the Dayton Settlement of the Bosnia crisis as proof that NATO could be persuaded to intervene militarily if sufficiently moved, and to re-order national boundaries. They set about creating the circumstances in which NATO airpower and preferably ground forces would be deployed in their support. They knew that they could count on the Serbs to over-react to their killing of policemen and soldiers, and that the international press would report on their own actions sympathetically given the Serb record over recent years.<sup>182</sup>

NATO in that sense became the air-arm of the KLA, a harmful interpretation vigorously denied by NATO, but apparently the admitted purpose of KLA operations over the months preceding NATO action. Mission-creep therefore cuts both ways, and it is wise to be conscious when overthrowing a regime, that one may be forwarding someone else’s agenda as well as one’s own.

## 2. Commitment

NATO’s success in persuading Slobodan Milosevic to capitulate was no doubt due to the withdrawal of Russian support, the economic damage inflicted on Milosevic’s supporters, and the imminence of NATO ground action, but also perhaps because NATO raised the stakes to a point where it could not be seen to fail and so could not back down. It had “burned its boats” and deliberately brought Milosevic to the brink, casting him as the recalcitrant at Rambouillet.<sup>183</sup> It had then put its reputation and credibility on the line and ensured that Milosevic knew it. In a sense, rightly or wrongly, the US has placed its credibility on the line in Iraq to the extent that it cannot but succeed, or at least claim to have done so. Queen Victoria also refused to listen to pessimistic talk of setbacks during the Boer War, claiming that defeat was unthinkable, and indeed it was. “Sway” over the whole empire was at stake.

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181 Lieutenant General Mike Jackson, the commander of KFOR, first heard on CNN on 4 June 1999 that he was to conduct such negotiations the following day.

182 Analysis explained to the author in conversations with KLA leaders in Pristina, June–September 1999.

183 The demand made of the Yugoslav Government to give NATO virtually unconstrained freedom of military action throughout the country, not just Kosovo, was bound to be unacceptable to the Yugoslavs.

### 3. Lessons Identified but not Learned

KFOR's entry into Kosovo was the military enabling operation that facilitated replacing the Yugoslav federal government in Kosovo by that of UNMIK. The transfer was total. It was not just about replacing leaders, but included the whole apparatus of civil government down to the last clerk issuing vehicle licenses in Pristina. Fortunately, much had been learned from the experience of international government in Bosnia. For UNMIK, there was a well-structured model with each aspect of government, from security, the economy, and governance to humanitarian relief assigned to a different international agency from NATO to the EU and the UNHCR, unified under the legitimizing leadership of the UN, embodied by representatives Sergio de Mello and his successor, Bernard Kouchner.

The problem was that there was little manpower pre-assigned to fill the posts in this well-planned structure. Many such as the UNMIK Police Commissioner had to be recruited once UNMIK was in place. There was no clear legal framework upon which to base UNMIK's rule, leaving an awkward period of legal ambiguity in security and law enforcement. There were no judicial system, police, courts, judges or prisons.<sup>184</sup> The law was clarified and Yugoslav law augmented by elements of European law, but how were troops to know it all and understand some subtle difference between military security and policing?

It had not been decided what currency would be legal tender, and how power and medical services would be provided once the ethnic Serbs who predominated in vital jobs had left the province, either of their own free will or through intimidation. It was physically difficult for the few UNMIK rulers to get out of the capital to interact with their new subjects around the province, and communications were poor.

There were other problems, some self-inflicted. NATO military action was not harmonized with the longer-term campaign intent. NATO bombing destroyed many of the barracks in which KFOR ground troops had planned to live, bridges that they needed to use had been destroyed, and the cell-phone system was knocked out days before KFOR entered the province, disabling UNMIK's early efforts to govern effectively.

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<sup>184</sup> The previous Yugoslav ruler of Kosovo was allowed to carry a firearm on the basis that he had a permit issued under his own rule, whose authority had not been superseded by any other regulation.

This lack of coordination was caused largely because, despite many years of familiarity with joint procedures, there was no land component nominated to state its case. The Joint Targeting Board (JTB) met just once, many months before KFOR entered Kosovo, but it was not reconvened, probably for fear that its views would prove as inconvenient as they had been at that one meeting in Naples.

Few can agree even today which force should have been the land component during NATO's air operations: SFOR, IFOR, AFOR, KFOR or US national forces in Albania under an American lieutenant general. The latter would not have been appropriate given that his was a national force and this was a NATO operation. Appointing the KFOR commander as the land component commander would have raised problems of placing American forces of Task Force HAWK under KFOR command. The RAND study<sup>185</sup> of 2002 recommended that US doctrine be strengthened to emphasize the need for a land component commander, but such good intentions and national considerations may not solve the problem in coalition operations when the appropriate land force is not an American one.

The matter went deeper than that. For months, the force that would become KFOR could not be termed that for political reasons, given that there was no plan to use ground forces in Kosovo, and operations were limited to action by air forces. There was a conviction that airpower would decide the matter and that its requirements should be paramount. Once it had triumphed, follow-on operations on the ground would be sorted out one way or another—it was “combat operations,” primarily from the air, that were to be decisive, not the nation-building operations they enabled. The Kosovo campaign thus probably affected strategic judgments that subsequent operations, Phase 4 Operations as they would be termed in Iraq in 2003, were somehow of secondary importance to “major combat operations,” although these would be greater in terms of casualties, cost and duration.

Nevertheless, lessons were identified from the misjudgments of the Kosovo campaign and were well-propagated in international military discourse. Sadly, these were not learned and implemented before Coalition operations in Iraq. If the aim is to change a regime rather than merely to destroy the existing one, it is necessary to have a clear idea of what will follow and to have a government in waiting, along with all the civilian agen-

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185 Nardulli (2002), pp. 113–14.

cies and vital services of a modern state. In Kosovo, civil power supply became the key indicator of progress briefed to commanders twice per day, and much would depend on keeping the operators of the coal-mining machinery alive and patching up dilapidated, ancient power-generating and distribution systems.

There was no civilian government of occupation in waiting for Iraq and an international bureaucracy was recruited late in the day on an *ad hoc* basis. Even when a governmental structure was put in place, many of the posts in the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA) and the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) that replaced it remained vacant. Shortly before deployment, 77 of ORHA's 165 posts were still unfilled. Even in October 2003, there had still been no agreement over what currency would be used and no cell-phone contract had been signed. The shortcomings were extensive, and although it would be too much to expect all to have run smoothly, there was little evidence of a conscientious learning process and of any lessons from Bosnia and Kosovo being implemented in Iraq.

#### 4. The Road to a Settlement?

Military action should be but one element in the ways and means of achieving broader strategic ends, ones that have a clear endstate, or at least an illustrative one. The main problem with the on-going campaign in Kosovo, compared to that in Bosnia, has been that there was no settlement at Kumanovo; indeed UNMIK was not a party to that negotiation, although KFOR designed the MTA of 10 June 1999 to strictly comply with UNHCR 1244. That was not the same thing as UNMIK agreeing to all its detailed provisions.

The Yugoslav (Serb) Government agreed that the NATO-led coalition would assume full security responsibilities in its place, the international community having determined that they themselves were not fit to exercise them. The return of Yugoslav forces in some form to assert and confirm their sovereign title to the province was a condition of the agreement that the Yugoslav armed forces would leave as KFOR entered, but it has not yet been kept. The Serbs feared that this provision, agreed in good faith on the day, would be treated with cynicism by those who followed and that in time it would be ignored as unrealistic. They were assured that they were wrong in this apprehension and conceded. At the same time, the Albanians had good reason to believe that the international community could hardly ignore their assumed right of self-determination and independence, a right they had fought for alongside NATO, or at least that is how they saw it.

The constitutional endstate of Kosovo remains unclear and it will require clever phrasing and hard bargaining to satisfy both sides. For years, clarity or intimations of what shape a future settlement might take in itself risked upsetting the peace, given that one side or the other would likely feel betrayed. Besides frustrating both sides in Kosovo, the delay in reaching a settlement made the task of nation-building all the harder. It is difficult to build the institutions of Government and civil society when the state that will provide their context is unknown and the route to its creation unclear. Larry Rossin, the American deputy leader of UNMIK was reported as saying “I think the development of their institutions is somewhat retarded by our continuing presence.”<sup>186</sup>

Worse, in the socio-political vacuum that developed, a criminal culture increasingly took hold on life in Kosovo. The former UN international ombudsman for Kosovo, Marek Antoni observed, “You have a criminal state in real power—it needs underground illegal structures to supply it with everything to survive. These networks can rely on weakness of the public institutions to sanction their operations.”<sup>187</sup>

In this respect, the longevity of UNMIK rule was not so much an asset as a liability, indicating strategic drift. The economy stagnated, crime flourished, and there were accusations of corruption and criminality in the UN itself. UNMIK dominated all, and there was little move to give local people responsibility for their own government, for this would have been seen to pre-empt some eventual settlement that could not yet be defined. On the other hand, given the incompatibility of the opposing interests, this sterile period may at least have had the merit of giving time for perceptions to change and for a realistic appreciation of the actual likely future of Kosovo to take root before negotiating a settlement.<sup>188</sup>

Although progress towards talks got underway in 2006, in February 2005, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan is reported to have asserted that Kosovo had made “insufficient” progress towards meeting internationally agreed standards with regard to Human Rights, respect for minorities and law and order, and that it was therefore premature to consider settling its long-term status.<sup>189</sup> The UN had set up an astonishing new test for independ-

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186 Wood (2005).

187 Quoted in Walker (2006), p. 25.

188 “Holding the ring” and allowing the perceptions of the parties to change has been at the heart of British policy in Northern Ireland since 1975.

189 *Economist*, 19 February 2005, p. 6.

ence: Self-determination can be granted only on condition of meeting ill-defined standards of “civilized” behavior. On those grounds, few European colonies would have been granted independence when they were. Annan would presumably have agreed with Churchill’s condemnation of the Atlantic Charter of 1941 on the same grounds.<sup>190</sup>

## 5. A Guide to Future International Relations? Enduring Dilemmas

The international community has been prepared to take military action in support of moral principle, but this has often been racked by paradox. On the one hand the sovereignty of the state has been diminished both by the new importance given to the sovereignty of the individual and by the endorsement of secession in the cause of nationalist self-determination; and on the other, it has been reinforced for purely pragmatic reasons once the implications of fragmentation have become clear. Protestations of some new morality in international affairs can appear to be cynical self-serving politics of the worst sort.

During the previous 40 years, it had become axiomatic that provinces should not be permitted to secede by violent rebellion. This now changed, and the rising tide of nationalisms against the dominance of Serbian nationalism within the Yugoslav state superseded the previous sense of a Yugoslav identity. Yet the international community was inconsistent, which was dangerous if it was simultaneously to assert points of principle.

Albanian Kosovars were denied self-determined independence in 1999 largely for fear of the effect upon Macedonia and its potentially separatist Albanian minority, and in order to assure a Yugoslav withdrawal from the province. The survival of Yugoslavia was once a tenet of British foreign policy under Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd, fearing the volatile consequences of its disintegration—the sovereignty of the state as the basis for the international system was stressed. It soon became axiomatic that the nationalist

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190 The Atlantic Charter, signed on 12 August 1941, raised issues of interpretation and created imperial tensions for the British. Article 3 declared, “The right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they live.” Clement Atlee declared that this applied to all peoples and races of the world. Churchill’s response was that this could not possibly apply to the peoples of say, Africa. The Burmese Prime Minister, U Saw, wrote to *The Times* in October 1941, asking, “What Burma wants to know is whether in fighting with many other countries for the freedom of the world, she is also fighting for her own freedom... The demand for complete self-government is a unanimous demand of the Burmese people, and it was made incessantly, long before the Atlantic Charter.” Thorne (1978), p. 59. Sadly for the people of Burma, self-rule has ended hopes of political freedom in any Western sense.

aspirations of the separatists should be recognized and Slovenia, Macedonia, Croatia, and Bosnia became independent. This self-determination was not, however, to be applied to the Serbs of Republika Serbska who wished to secede from Bosnia to join Serbia. At the same time, the province of Kosovo was *de facto* detached from Serbia following a violent insurrection by its majority Albanian population; and Kosovo will almost certainly not resume its former Serbian identity, although the matter has yet to be settled.

The reasons for all of this were usually ones of pragmatism, but the unequal treatment caused deep resentment. If there had been a referendum in Bosnia in 1995 on the question, “Do you wish to live in a unitary state called Bosnia?”, the answer would almost certainly have seen Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Serbs, the majority, saying that they would not. The international community could not risk receiving the “wrong” answer and the question was not asked. In March 2006, American officials are reported to have stressed that independence for Kosovo would be a unique event and not a precedent for secession by, for example, Chechnya, Taiwan or Tibet.<sup>191</sup> To deny that an obvious precedent is a precedent, because one would wish that it were not, hardly reinforces the foundations of diplomacy.

In Iraq after 2003, it would be interesting to know how a similar referendum question would have been answered; and how a clear wish by the Kurds to secede, forming the core of a future Kurdistan, would have been handled. The question could not be asked, for it was axiomatic that the country should be held together on the frontiers set by the former British rulers. Ironically, a unitary Iraq might yet prove a greater threat to Western interests than a fragmented one. It might also be that the Coalition started to lose the moral high ground of its democratic proposition when it continually supported the idea of rule by appointed bodies and vetoed the direct local elections for which Ayatollah Sistani called. Clearly the Coalition feared “the wrong answer” and seemed to end up supporting the sort of puppet rulers that the British had resorted to nearly a century earlier, having despaired of instituting democracy in the new country.

The diminution of the sovereignty of the state, in the face of competing Human Rights legislation, has also eroded the national sovereignty of those with an inclination to intervene. Nations such as the UK have surrendered aspects of their national sovereignty

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<sup>191</sup> Reported in Dinmore and Dombey (2006).



and law, or rather incorporated international law into their national law, making them amenable to a wide range of European and other international legislation. This has also affected the way their troops can conduct themselves on operations. The International Criminal Court was established in 1998 to deal with Human Rights offenders among others, but the US has been more jealous of the inviolability of its own sovereignty than others and has not submitted itself to such legislation.

## 6. An Opportunity Lost

It seems clear that in the on-going Kosovo campaign the connections between military ways and means have been out of harmony with ill-defined political ends. There was a lack of political vision for the future of the province, a disconnection between the UN and NATO, a disconnection between NATO military commanders and their own political masters,<sup>192</sup> and a lack of coherence between the military action of the armed services and the objectives of UNMIK.

A comprehensive campaign plan and the need for a multi-agency approach was the most trumpeted lesson learned from the Balkans episodes, and while this was analyzed subsequently in great detail, it was apparently not taken into military culture and certainly not reflected in military behavior. It was after all on 11 October 2000, only 14 months after KFOR entered Kosovo, that Candidate Bush dismissed any nation-building role for the US military whose job was to fight and win the nation's wars, "...so I don't think our troops ought to be used for what's called nation-building."<sup>193</sup>

The Global War on Terror (GWOT) was seen to be "a long haul,"<sup>194</sup> yet forces were increasingly designed for short wars using rapidly-deployable, novel technologies. While the war in Iraq from 2003 was to be regarded as an intrinsic part of the GWOT, little was done to prepare for the sort of protracted, attritional, low-intensity operations of counter-insurgency and the nation-building it would entail. The emphasis continued

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192 SACEUR, General Wesley Clark has described his version of events in Clark (2001).

193 Thomas (2003).

194 US joint doctrine notes the need for perseverance, defined as, "The measured, protracted application of military capability in support of strategic aims." Joint Publication 3-07, pp. II-4–II-5.

Frank Hoffman has pointed out that national will and the capacity to endure and succeed in protracted campaigns are characteristics beyond persistence. Persistently misunderstanding the nature of the endeavour, and persistently applying inappropriate tactics will be counter-productive. Hoffman (2005).

to be on the very opposite. Alternatively, it was perhaps thought that neither major nation-building nor COIN would be required in operations in Iraq.

Brian Linn has maintained that the US military “has been very resistant to any prolonged theoretical exploration of peacekeeping, pacification, occupation, stability operations, and counterinsurgency”<sup>195</sup>—an aversion that has waned fast. In 2006, the ill-named GWOT was re-termed “The Long-War,” warning Americans of the task they faced. Yet this term also has perils, for few candidates for office purvey “more of the same.” The difficulties of waging a protracted campaign in the context of the democratic electoral-cycle have not been resolved.

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<sup>195</sup> Linn (2005), p. 9.

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## VI. Two Tales

The experiences of nation-building have produced starkly different outcomes that bear caricature.

### A. Success

Successful nation-building ventures have many common characteristics. The institutions of the state become stronger and the people increasingly identify with them. Elections are fair, and a free press and a loyal opposition are seen as vital elements in society even by the government they criticize.

Sovereignty clearly resides in the people rather than in the institutions of the government ruling them. Paradoxically, this may enable the state to allow the people greater power of decision in their own lives; and a secure national government may feel able to grant greater powers of autonomy to its regions, reinforcing their loyalty to the whole that presents no threat to their aspirations.

The armed forces' primary role is national defense against external threats rather than internal security. Their budget commands a relatively small part of the national wealth, and a career in the armed forces may be esteemed, but is not the route to domestic power or wealth. The economy grows with enterprise and investment, led by an educated middle class, soon to be joined by others for whom education and the possibility of self-improvement is a realistic aspiration. The Government encourages private enterprise, and revenues from this readily finance the small government sector which facilitates economic growth rather than stifles it. An equitable legal system underpins all of this and encourages foreign investment. Many now forget that this was only recently a Third World nation, how its good fortune was engineered, and by whom.

### B. Failure

The characteristics of failed nations and nation-building are sadly conspicuous around the world. Once the nation-builder departs, central government cannot control

fractious provinces and regions, which either secede or become lawless. The ethnic, religious and political seams are pulled apart. Central government reacts with repressive measures that make matters worse, but it lacks the resources of all sorts to deal with the opposition effectively.

Revenge may be taken against those who sided with the departed nation-builders. These victims seemed powerful when backed by the outsiders, but are easy meat once left to fend for themselves in a hostile society. Many saw the way the wind was blowing and discreetly, or even openly, made their arrangements with the future powers before the nation-builders had even left.

Fearing the effects of political controversy in a turbulent society, and having no wish to offer power to those who hate them, the government attempts to ban politics by ending elections. It declares that its own one-party system is a more traditional form of government and reinforces the national unity which is lacking. The law becomes not a set of rules by which all agree to live but rather the means by which they are ruled by others. There is little criticism from abroad and a reluctance by former occupiers to return. To some of these there is even a perverse satisfaction that those who had been their critics are now having to face life without them, but humanitarian concerns are soon voiced, just as they were at the launch of their nation-building project years before.

The government seeks to buy loyalty or reward its natural constituency by offering well-paid secure employment independent of any requirement to generate wealth. Government employment is not a job *per se*, but a reward. The ability to gather revenues to pay for the state sector diminishes. Revenue can increasingly only be raised by tougher measures against those who do create wealth, and by punitive action against those whose disaffection is thereby exacerbated.

As government work fails to offer a viable wage, those who would otherwise support the government also join the ranks of the lawless. Crime pays relatively well. Education is unaffordable, or unavailable. It ceases in any case to be the best route to prosperity. The armed forces, police, and customs service are especially well-placed to raise private revenues. New lucrative industries such as narcotics, human trafficking, and money laundering thrive, but they come at a price to society.

Politicians and government officials realize they have perhaps this one chance to secure their own and their family's financial security, and corruption becomes an essential

part of doing business. It becomes hard to tell what is corruption, crime or local business custom. Outsiders seeking contracts or advantage understand the rules and provide much of the fuel for a “food chain” of corruption. Government spending on necessary infrastructure dries up because it delivers no short-term advantage, money has better uses.

The government and its antagonistic subjects both seek help from outside and accept the strings attached to any financial assistance. The country may now become a destabilizing element in a wider regional security problem and further threats seep into it through increasingly porous borders. Broken societies create refugees who compound the problems of their own country and their neighbors, and create a disabling dependency culture rooted in international agencies’ largesse. Many call for the cancellation of debt and the massive infusion of aid they imagine will solve these fundamental problems.

Foreign assistance often takes the form of weapons, and conflict becomes increasingly lethal. Personal security becomes an individual’s responsibility rather than the state’s, and many make a Faustian pact, looking to traditional leadership structures to provide them with “feudal” protection in return for their service. New sinews of loyalty at odds with those of the state grow rapidly.

The people of this dysfunctional country cannot somehow understand the fate that has befallen them. They blame droughts, globalism, and international banks but seldom their own culture and leadership, or they at least prudently wait until the culprits have been removed from power before doing so. The easiest and immediate target for blame is the departed nation-builder who failed to leave a viable government and who failed to carry out their responsibility to provide security as the occupier of their country. They had failed to build a modern economic infrastructure, and their cruelty had been evident for years in suppressing the “patriots” who were nonetheless justified in sabotaging efforts to create what the critics now complain is lacking.

In time, new villains arise in their lives and while they cannot bring themselves to say so in public, the relative goodwill, objectivity, and generosity of their former occupiers come to seem like some golden age, but one whose name they dare not speak from shame. Many give up and acknowledge that this is the condition to which fate or God has consigned them.

It was clear that any appearance of successful nation-building had been just that, not substance. Many had cooperated with the occupier for their own purposes, but there had been no deep systemic transfer of institutional and social values.

These two tales above are reported every day, the first predominantly in the business pages of newspapers and the latter under “Foreign News.” The Coalition nation-building projects in Iraq and Afghanistan still lie in the balance but give grounds for pessimism as familiar patterns unfold.

## VII. Themes and Dilemmas for Nation Builders

### A. Idealism Meets Cultural Relativism

Colonialism and imperialism have generally been anathema to those who now seek to intervene around the world militarily, perhaps to change regimes, perhaps on humanitarian grounds, and frequently to build nations. They have typically preferred to see themselves as coming from various traditions which opposed the British imperial project—all recent constituencies in the US, and the Left in the UK—yet these pioneers of the new interventionism are now regarded, rather to their surprise, as the neo-imperialist heirs of Gladstone, or even of Palmerston, Disraeli, Roosevelt, and Mahan.

They have yet to square the circle of believing that they know best, backed by the confidence and means to do something about it, with the moral relativism to which they are also prone that says everyone else's view is also valid in some way. Where are they to draw the line, and who has the right to act on that judgment unilaterally? The answer is no more available or convincing now than it was 100 years ago. The means and conviction to act remain the measure of ability, and success is often the apparent vindication; although some more uplifting rationale would be welcome if it were available.

Are we indeed in a new age of democratic messianism, founded in some neo-Victorian belief that history has a providential design rooted in “progress,” in which Human Rights and “individual sovereignty” carry more weight than the sovereignty of the nation-state? Without that, what might the agenda for nation-building be, other than self-interest? Self-interest may be a powerful motive for global adventure, but it is unlikely to be a sufficient one.

Idealism and ideology do once more appear to drive international relations, or at least the language of idealism is often employed. There was an ideological idealism during the Cold War, but it was most commonly expressed through great power rivalry and the idea that the nation-state was sacrosanct. Today, the perceived need to fight or lobby for the universal applicability of Human Rights in the face of petty tyrannical regimes, or as embodied by China or some new Caliphate, is more common. Meanwhile struggles



over supplies of oil, even coal, copper, water, and their transportation provide a more materialistic back-drop to foreign policy formulation.

Can the West's model of individual liberty and personal fulfillment, matched with high material consumption, indeed be a universal one transferable to other cultures, as has long been claimed? What if it cannot be transferred to an extra two billion Indian and Chinese consumers without the model itself changing? Any transfer would also affect the lifestyle of Westerners increasingly locked in a competition for raw materials, even if that were a competition expressed only through pricing in a fungible global market. If the West's universalist manifesto were a false one, how might the shock of this revelation be broken to those who had assumed it could also apply to them? How would the West itself react to the knowledge that it was good only for a few people like themselves for one period of history, and that the globalization of their principles had merely exposed its limitations and undermined their own lifestyles?

Can the new certainties underwriting today's nation-building efforts be sustained if the will is questioned by other voices—especially those of the electorates who foot the bill and others who are queasy about any such certainty in human affairs, seeing them perhaps as historical fads, masquerading as moral immutables? How deep is the belief in these principles when set against other interests? Without a sturdy foundation, an idea of the ends, can the ways be devised and the means marshaled to prevail? The Victorian notion of empire had such foundations. Their withering and that of the British Empire was a symbiotic one.

Sometimes the new idealism can be seen to have a religious hue. President G.W. Bush asserted in various speeches that freedom was God's gift to every individual, which would imply that the US was acting as His agent in its "Forward Strategy of Freedom."<sup>196</sup> This public association of religion with the formulation of foreign policy had a Victorian ring to it, a "muscular Christianity" familiar to the likes of Frank Lugard Brayne, but absent from Western discourse for many decades. Tony Blair's reference to God in the formulation of his foreign policy on a television chat show in March 2006 was a startling novelty in modern British politics.

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196 President Bush speaking at the Royal United Services Institute, London, 19 November 2003. Quoted in Strachan (2005), p. 1.

If there are new certainties for some about how the world should be, and what should be done to make it so, how is the West to reconcile this impulse with the equally powerful force in its contemporary thinking—that of cultural and moral relativism? This can offer a contradiction as stark as that between Abolitionists and slavers in Western societies in the early 19th century, and between those who saw the Raj as the means to transform India and those who saw it as a shameless racket. How is the West to manage the cultural encounters and tensions that result from its nation-building ventures and other military operations?

It is likely that Cortez and Montezuma each regarded the other as a worshiper of a death cult. In turn, can we be sure today that the use of fetish and taboo in military reconnaissance on operations in West Africa is less valid or efficacious than Feng Shui in the design of apartments in Greenwich Village or Notting Hill, or than the various religious ceremonies attended by Western leaders themselves, let alone Woodrow Wilson's Ouija boards and numerology?<sup>197</sup> Is our inability to see the "bush spirits" of Sierra Leone proof enough that they do not exist, even though others claim that they can see them? Believers in African magic require no proof other than their own conviction. Nor do those in the West who claim to understand the currents of their life through horoscopes and psychic television channels, and those who claim benefit from unusual arrangements of pyramids in their sitting rooms. How much patronizing superiority will Westerners allow themselves? Others will wonder how much primitive delusion sane people will leave unchallenged.

The idea that all people are of equal worth and are to be treated equally is an especially Western notion and a relatively recent one.<sup>198</sup> In global and historical perspective, this is a curious and minority view. In most of the world's great civilizations, cultures and religions people are deemed unequal by race, caste, gender, social position, or by some distinction made between "believers" and "unbelievers." Fundamental inequality is taken as a given by most, rather as slavery was once accepted in the West as a part of the human condition. For now, the West that champions individual liberties and challenges inequality in the world, has the loudest voice and the greatest military capability to back its minority view.

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197 McDougall (1997), p. 126.

198 Inequality is still permitted in the West in the case of those deemed not to be adult, and the age of adulthood varies. Inequality of rights is also frequently mandated in the case of criminals, the mentally-ill, and where affirmative action is taken for reasons of social engineering.

Many in the West seem embarrassed by the novelty and origins of their own beliefs and seek to project these onto others. They claim that all great civilizations are of one in respecting common humanity and faith, although in the key and distinguishing matter of human equality and due treatment, such an assertion is plainly false. This modesty, perhaps born of guilt and insecurity, helps to explain the frequent surprise that Western values are not immediately welcomed by those to whom they are “offered,” sometimes by force. The recipients simply do not recognize them as being their own, and cannot accept the fundamental challenge they represent to their own way of life.<sup>199</sup> As Robert McAndrews, a Peace Corps volunteer in Liberia despaired in the 1960s, “I was trying to teach some democratic principles...the whole tradition of society was geared to a different set of principles.”<sup>200</sup> The dilemma was that a profound belief in equality might include a respect for other cultures, but how could that be shown if it was a tenet of that culture that all were not equal.<sup>201</sup>

Too often, the West is inclined to believe that because its own values are fundamentally held in common, whether all realize it or not, any regime that does not defend them must be at odds with its own people whom it thereby oppresses. On the contrary, such a regime may represent their temper very faithfully, often to those same people’s disadvantage. It may well be that in some fundamental sense Saddam Hussein was indeed a true reflection of Iraqi society, although many would prefer to see him as some tyrant ruling over people of very different cultural assumptions and traditions from his own.

It falls to troops in the theater of operations to handle the fall-out when the reactions of recipients to the values being purveyed have been misappreciated. Cultural awareness and consideration is thus at the forefront of current Western military thinking, as it often was in the days of the Raj. That cultural understanding is as vital at the

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199 The conundrum was encapsulated in March 2006 in the case of Abdul Rahman, an Afghan who faced the death sentence for apostasy, having converted to Christianity many years earlier, despite Afghanistan being a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Sharia law, which rules on apostasy, is also enshrined in the Afghan constitution. Meanwhile, the Afghan Government was being supported by a Coalition of mostly Western nation-builders who presumably felt that they were bringing values entirely alien to this local norm. The unbridgeable cultural gulf was only bridged by the fiction that Rahman must be insane and so not liable to the death penalty.

200 Fischer (1998), p. 179–80. There was a feeling that trying to impose Western culture on others could be counter-productive. The Peace Corps’ own educational consultant, Professor John Lunstrum, complained at “the zealous, dogmatic application of American egalitarian values in the field.”

201 Fischer (1998).

strategic level as it is to “the strategic corporal” on the street, but has sometimes been less apparent at the higher levels.<sup>202</sup> Western military forces now pay at least as much attention and respect to the sensitivities of the other mainstream religions that they encounter around the world as they do to their own. However, is that sensitivity merely an hypocrisy of convenience, if they do not accord the same reverence and consideration to some of the less familiar and more culturally surprising rites which they might encounter in, say, parts of West Africa?

These same questions of cultural clash arose in the age of Victorian nation-building. Society had many voices: that of the pragmatic administrator seeking stability and security; the soldier who probably sought a situation where none had cause, or perhaps dared, to challenge his primacy; the merchant seeking the same to increase trade and the opportunities for investment; the evangelicals who believed that others must accept the truth as revealed to them; and a general public to whom all had ultimately to pay heed and which reflected all of these views to different degrees, often commensurate with whichever managed to rouse their feelings most.

This pattern of interests remains much the same today in Western society. That said, in Victorian times exhibitions of “savagery” reinforced the assumed superiority of the “civilized,” supported by much of the Darwinian and Spencerian science of the day. For many there was little point in fighting against what was apparently the “natural condition,” only its worst excesses. Today, few cite the “natural condition” because of its acceptance of inequality, and because it seems at times to justify passivity. Yet the muted reaction of many to events in, say, Dafur indicates that some are indeed held to a lower standard, and their “savagery” is seen to be somehow normal for them and only to be expected.

On 5 March 2006, the Archbishop of Canterbury launched a scathing attack on the US’s detention arrangements at Guantanamo Bay, a “soft target.” He chose to raise this subject while visiting the Sudanese capital, Khartoum, yet made only fleeting reference to the unfolding tragedy in the Dafur province of that country where his hosts had been accused of genocide against their own people. No one “would have guessed that this conflict—one of the world’s bloodiest—was raging barely a few hundred miles away.

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202 Britain’s cultural mishandling of its occupation of Iraq after the First World War is damningly described by William Polk, in Polk (2005), chap. 3. Almost every mistake the British made was replicated by the Coalition after 2003. It remains to be seen if Iraq fractures as India did after its occupiers had left.

The only human rights abuses that seemed to trouble Dr. Williams were those taking place on the far side of the world in Guantanamo Bay...he said nothing about the two million refugees driven from their homes...’’<sup>203</sup>

The West shares the same dilemma as the Victorians—how to reconcile the inner convictions that drive their interventionist urges with the generally liberal attitudes of their societies and own self-image? If other nations are to be built, are their peoples’ cultures also to be re-ordered? If not, how can that created or renewed national entity be sustained? The West purveys subjective certainties, which may seem to be self-evidently just. Its armed forces and other Government bodies are presented as the agents of an ultimately benevolent providence—“A Force for Good” as the British Ministry of Defence has unwisely been branded by its political masters—but how are they to be squared with the West’s other totemic certainties of Human Rights, the celebration of cultural diversity, religious freedom, and an aversion to anything that might cast them as aggressors?

At what point does Western tolerance meet a line that was intolerable to the Victorians, giving them the certainty to forbid and destroy? At what point does traditional practice in a far-away place become so abhorrent that the qualms of Western cultural relativists are set aside? Certainly, moral consistency over time seems an unreasonable ambition.<sup>204</sup>

In Western democracies, public opinion will decide, but public opinion can be fickle and readily change its mind once an irrevocable course of policy has been set. Why should the practices and values of others be held hostage to the vagaries of Western electorates?—Western nations would not accept such external regulation of their own affairs. A combination of power and conviction is a luxury few can enjoy, but in 1897 Britain did. Others are unlikely to be so fortunate.

## B. A Civilizing Mission?

Today’s apparent, but frequently denied, clash of civilizations is often portrayed in terms of culture, and rights versus denial of rights, whereas in the past it was often portrayed in terms of race, and civilization versus barbarism. In a daring construction,

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203 Blair (2006).

204 Moral judgments morph across time. The Victorians banned *sati* in India when suicide was still illegal in England. If suicide had been as legal as it is today, would the same logic that banned *sati* still be tenable, *pace* any assistance provided and the sensation of its public display?

Prime Minister Tony Blair denied that there was a clash “between” civilizations, rather a clash “about” civilization. This cozy formula obviated any judgmental “them” and “us” dichotomy, for all are in fact “we.” The issue, he claimed is about “progress” versus “reaction”; all of “us” naturally being in favor of what “we” term progress, although others might regard Western values as blasphemy and decadence.

Blair avoided the logic of labeling those whom he would see as reactionaries, “them.” “‘We’ is not the West. ‘We’ are as much Muslim as Christian, or Jew or Hindu. ‘We’ are those who...believe in openness to others, to democracy, liberty and human rights.”<sup>205</sup> Categorizing “good” and “evil,” “progress” and “reaction” without pondering why others might think differently to that which serves us does not help understanding. This incomplete and Manichean lack of a broader, more complex cultural understanding can render a great disservice in formulating foreign policy.

In the past, the so-called benighted were given the benefits of Western civilization by imperialists whether they liked it or not. Today, they are said to be “liberated” and are offered, or have imposed upon them, Human Rights, which provide the West with its own home-grown moral mandate for global action. It has become an essential tenet of the proposition of Human Rights that they are not a Western construct, but enjoy a universality whose precepts are common to all major cultures.

Human Rights seem curiously congruent with Western values, and while they accommodate diversity and multi-culturalism, these are placed strictly within the confines of what is acceptable to Western sensibilities—what the Victorians would have termed “civilized and Christian” behavior. It is certainly only the West that has initiated and prosecuted military operations in their name.

Human Rights have moral imperatives and a universalism for which the West recognizes no frontiers. The frontiers of that morality are being pushed out ever further in the drive to fulfill some new Western “soft” notion of Manifest Destiny, asserting values to be defended by some new “Monroe Doctrine” that will tolerate little interference in this new empire of ideas. These frontiers are to be policed physically, rather as the abolition of slavery was enforced unilaterally by the forces of the British Empire from the mid-19th century. All may be well, but a Manifest Destiny and Monroe Doctrine can lead

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205 Mr. Blair speaking at Canary Wharf on 21 March 2006, reported in *Metro*, London, 22 March 2006, p. 4.

to trouble when they come up against somebody else's versions of the same. In the future, those may be China's. By similar analogy, the US's virtual "Monroe Doctrine" defending the universal evangelizing of Western values may already have met the "Monroe Doctrine" of some revived notion of the Moslem Caliphate, which believes its defenses are being breached asymmetrically by the values the West itself asserts must prevail.

Military intervention has created unusual ideological companions as the old polarities of the Cold War prove inappropriate to the new dynamic. In caricature: the old left who detest the assumption that "West is Best" denounce military intervention, seeing it as incorrigible, serial misbehavior by those who cannot let go of old imperial habits. They are joined in their policy conclusions by members of the old right, of isolationist instincts, who believe it is not worth the bones of their grenadiers or the gold of their treasuries to save those incapable of ruling themselves, people who will at heart resent any help they are given.

At odds with this odd couple are the new interventionists. They also come from the old left, but are now transformed into "Fabian Imperialists."<sup>206</sup> David Livingstone took "Christianity and Civilization" to Africa, both of which have become somewhat "politically incorrect" ideas, followed by the soldier and the "Union Jack." These fundamentally Judeo-Christian notions have been "re-packaged" for a new age, and "re-branded" as Human Rights, supported by the word of international law if not the word of Scripture, and enforced preferably by blue helmets not pith helmets, under the UN flag rather than the "Union Jack." These interventionists know that "up-river in the heart of darkness" unspeakable things are being done, and that it is their moral duty to put a stop to it, by force if necessary—for their militaries are no doubt "a force for good," in "the forward strategy of freedom."

Their allies come from the old imperial right, "Kipling's Men," who are not surprised that other folk make a mess of their own affairs, and believe it falls to them to sort out the resultant horrors, confident in their comparative advantage built up from centuries of global military experience.

A. Bonnett has argued that "For the majority of Western triumphalists, all that needs to happen is that the world "opens up", begins to see things "our way" and acts

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206 The predicament of liberal internationalism is described in Rieff (2005).

accordingly.”<sup>207</sup> This is not merely “opening up” in the sense of 19th century Japan, or the “open door policy” toward China, it is the idea that the empire of ideas must expand. It is about the “open door” of the World Trade Organization, the “open door” of a free global press, corporate accountability, a global accounting standard, intellectual property rights and international law. That said, the US is not necessarily amenable to all of these global ideas and their constraints on its freedom of action, any more than it favored the League of Nations, which it championed but did not join.

At the beginning of the 21st century, Americans and Europeans argued about the meaning, implications, and obligations of their Western civilization; and in another ironic turn, many Americans resented what they saw as a European tendency to isolationism, and a reluctance to take on strategic challenges, rather as the US had itself been criticized in the 1930s. It was now the Americans who were the more likely to embark upon and seek moral justification for military action to further these cultural objectives, warning against the appeasement of tyranny. Many people of the old European imperial powers opposed American interventions such as that in Iraq in 2003, having long lost their appetites for military expeditions to change regimes, resenting and perhaps humbled by the “imperial” confidence of the US which saw such action to be necessary rather than anachronistic.

### C. A Passing Phase—An Historic Error Repeated?

The term “Imperial policing” fell out of favor when empires disappeared. Yet analogous operations were common even during the Cold War, when such activity was seen in the context of building or shoring-up regimes and societies opposed to and intended to be proof against Communism. The record of success was mixed. Ironically, the US, the country most able to conduct such operations in terms of political leadership and resources, and which had considerable experience and success in it, soon set itself against participating in such operations, with Candidate George W. Bush’s assertion of 11 October 2000.<sup>208</sup>

The biggest test for this rejection of nation-building came, without international consensus, with the American-led Coalition’s invasion of Iraq in 2003, when nation-

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207 Bonnett (2004), p. 37.

208 Bush, George W., “The Second Gore-Bush Presidential Debate,” October 11, 2000, transcript, Commission on Presidential Debates, [www.debates.org/pages/trans2000b.html](http://www.debates.org/pages/trans2000b.html).



building, a necessary element in the success of the enterprise, was scarcely recognized as such and certainly not planned for adequately.<sup>209</sup> The same was true of the counter-insurgency operations, the need for which, far from being anticipated and prepared for well in advance, were not acknowledged until months after the insurgency had begun.

“Sway,” “face,” and even bluff are intangible but potent assets for any occupier or nation-builder. Much depends on such perceptions, for people respect competence and power, the “mandate of heaven,” and the apparent inevitability of success helps to breed it. The Coalition in Iraq had many important advantages in April 2003. Its massive military power seemed so overwhelming that the Iraqis might even have thought their own poor military performance no humiliation in what could be portrayed as an unfair fight. Coalition military power was supreme, representing Western societies at the peak of technological modernity, the greatest generators of wealth in the world. The invaders also came determined to change the lives of the Iraqi people for the better.

Had this “sway” been reinforced immediately in line with the expectations of the Iraqis themselves, events might well have developed very differently. As it was, “Clausewitzian Tilt” veered events in the opposite direction. This stock of moral capital was wasted as the lives of the Iraqi people did not seem to improve, and there was little evidence of the occupiers delivering modernity and impressive technology. More damagingly, their military power was suddenly seen to be vulnerable and clumsy in the face of the “Davids,” who with few resources other than determination and a willingness to die, could strike effectively against the occupying “Goliaths,” whose failings were perhaps a consequence of their infidelity. In a remarkably short time, the occupiers to some looked weak and incompetent, the representatives of an alien culture, people who would surely tire and soon leave the Iraqi people to decide their own future. The opposition was emboldened and empowered.

Success in nation-building and SASO seems to depend upon coherence between, ends, ways, and means over protracted periods of time. What if it were concluded that the sacrifices entailed by anything less merely attracted international hostility and ingratitude from the supposed beneficiaries of such efforts? What if they were to prove a strategic distraction and liability, weakening the West in the face of greater threats? What if the

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209 David Phillips has argued, perhaps generously, that the requirements of nation-building were accounted for, but merely undermined or ignored in delivery. Phillips (2005).

conviction that the advent of democracy will result in regimes which do not threaten or fight other democracies is misplaced; and if those granted democracy do not vote as those who facilitated it would wish? What if Western nation-building operations conducted over years, rather than decades or centuries, turn out merely to change forms not substance, rather as even the British Empire is now seen to have done in its less-developed colonies once they had been granted premature independence, leading to damaging instability? What if today's nation-building operations turn out merely to change the means by which "undesirable" governments come to power, now with the embarrassing endorsement of their people, thanks to the efforts of Western interventionists.

Would the premise of the providential march of history, entailing the belief that the Western way has a universal applicability that will ultimately triumph, have been wrecked somewhere on the Tigris, in the Levant or the Pamirs; or would it merely have shown how great must be the efforts to prevail against the forces arrayed against it?

## D. Darwin Strikes Back?

Is the West guilty of an inability to learn that the rest of the world is not destined to adopt its values, a delusion that in an individual might be diagnosed as a serious personality dysfunction? Or is it merely the case that the West's values will not survive unless they are vigorously championed, at times with offensive action? In the anonymous *The Battle of Dorking of 1871*, the author described Britain's future military downfall as a "judgment...deserved." "A nation too selfish to defend its liberty could not have been fit to retain it."<sup>210</sup>

This distinction mirrors old debates on the implications of Darwin for international relations. Some held initially that the Europeans were destined to triumph over others because they were superior. After Spencer, the argument was worryingly recast and apparently revealed that the West would only survive in a challenging environment if it competed with others who might be better suited to its changes—nothing was deter-

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210 Clarke (1995), p. 73. This notion re-surfaced in the 1990s in a novel form in the extremist Islamic approach to the West. In his "Declaration of War against the Americans" in 1996, following the bombing of hotels in Aden, and the US's precipitate withdrawal from Somalia, Osama bin Laden is reported to have said, "You have been disgraced by Allah and you withdrew. The extent of your impotence and weakness became very clear." Steyn (2004).

mined, and all depended upon individual and national effort, an idea that appealed to the self-reliant Protestant ethic of the day.

Today, some suspect that the inherent superiority of Western values will inevitably lead to their universal triumph, while others fret that they are under attack and that it is complacent to take this for granted. If the defense of Western values requires their active propagation, it is not clear whether the will and moral certainties exist to achieve that, let alone the resources, any more than they did in the twilight of Britain's imperial age.

## E. The Role of Compromise

On the one hand, Western leaders leave little scope to compromise over points as fundamental as the tenets of Human Rights—they are inherently not negotiable. Yet, compromise has often been an important element in peace-making and nation-building, presenting uncomfortable choices. Support for ceasefires, which may seem intrinsically good to those who seek peace, may be malign, and impartiality a bogus virtue when partiality is called for. Impartiality or sensitivity to cultural diversity may appear to be fitting justifications for inaction in the face of atrocities in say Rwanda, Srebrenica or Dafur.

Compromise and participation in a “peace process” may also be seen as appeasement and self-interested indifference to the suffering of others. Much is in the eye of the beholder. If a criterion for a just war is that it must be winnable, then pragmatism also lies at the heart of principle. The scope for disagreement on what is a shoddy surrender in the face of intimidation and unwelcome cost, and what is a triumph of peacemaking of “Nobel” proportions is vast and itself potentially damaging.

It is hard to negotiate with those who are armed, and even harder to grant them a share of power, especially if they see the negotiation and any agreement as merely steps in a longer journey that is far from complete. Many felt that the West, including Britain, was wrong to press President Kabbah to compromise with undemocratic forces who seemed unlikely to keep their side of any bargain. There was a feeling that they did so for a quiet life, when active support in the face of undemocratic Human Rights abusers would have been the more noble course, and that course was eventually taken. Whether the de-Ba'athification of Iraq and the disbandment of the Iraqi Army was an ideological step beyond prudence will remain a key element in the debate about the campaign in Iraq after Spring 2003.

Dilemmas persist even after an intervention has been successful, when re-shaping a society to withstand the shocks of its aftermath and to ameliorate some of the problems that gave rise to the original conflict. It entails decisions about whether to pursue all thought to be complicit in crimes against humanity and to prosecute them in international courts, irrespective of the damage that may do to future chances of stability. It may seem best to draw a line under the misery of recent events with an amnesty for fear of keeping alive the flames of future conflict. This would see some of the guilty go free, guilt being an ambiguous concept in chaotic circumstances.

Violence often pays—hardly a surprise given that most nations were created by and have survived thanks to violence; yet compromise also has a role if pride and principle can bend. In 1890, the Duke of Clarence shook hands with Ayub Khan who had led resistance to the British in Afghanistan 10 years earlier. The British withdrawal from empire witnessed negotiation with many whom had earlier been cast as terrorists, or their associates, and who later went on to become leaders of their countries and sit beside the Queen for photos at Commonwealth Conferences—men like Archbishop Makarios and Jomo Kenyatta. Some see a “Truth and Reconciliation” process like Chile’s or South Africa’s to be a means of national-healing, while others see it as the opposite. Some see pursuing Human Rights offenders as just and necessary while others see it as disruptive zealotry. Others point out that amnesties often fail to halt conflict and that amnesties are often revoked in practice once conditions have stabilized.

Today, the British Government makes deals with the political voice of the Provisional Irish Republican Army which it has been fighting for over 35 years, an organization which has killed and wounded British ministers and relations of the head of state. Success in such negotiations depends in large part upon how they are presented, as surrender to terror or inspired political courage. Fictions are necessary.

Some have said that there should be no negotiation or peace process with the democratically elected Hamas while it is still armed, that one cannot have a peace process with a political party that has an armed wing. The logic deficit seems large. There would be little point in having a peace process with a body that was not armed, while excluding those who are. It would be hard to see such a process ending in peace. Refusing to make a deal with an armed opponent seems like another way of saying that one intends to defeat them rather than make any concession. Of course in practice, refusing to negotiate with an opponent until he has met certain demands to disarm contains a contradiction,

for it shows that the negotiation has already begun, albeit not around a table. It is a distinction of seating arrangements and telegeny, not principle.

## F. Nation-Building and the Decline of the Nation-State

The British tried to create political entities based on their assessment of what might in time become viable modern states. This involved balancing or reconciling religious and ethnic groups, melding areas rich in mineral or agricultural wealth with those that had little, and matching the urban populations with those of the countryside. This would embed any tensions within the state, but its strong centralizing institutions would hold violence in check; and in time those tensions would fade as progress and enlightenment spread, along with a unifying sense of nationhood.

The British themselves provided that unifying strong central government and tried to reinforce a new sense of nationhood that would survive intact once they had departed. This was sometimes a risky policy, for their chief opponents were often nationalists agitating for the early independence of the very nation that the British had themselves created.

This solution nevertheless seemed preferable to one where tensions lay outside the state and thus between peoples with many reasons to fight each other, as they had before the British arrived. Time was the key to success, but it ran out. The voices calling for independence could not be resisted, for they had seized the moral high ground; and Britain lacked the will and resources to hang on. Independence was given under pressure in what were often rapidly changing and sub-optimal circumstances. It is now clear that in many cases the British departed before the consciousness of a national identity could supplant other factional interests in the embryonic states they were building.

Citing the mayhem that often followed British departure from empire, especially in Africa, is a poor argument against creating the states in question, whose boundaries the OAU now defend as a matter of principle. It is difficult to see how sub-Saharan Africa, for example, would prosper more in the modern world with its pre-colonial political arrangements, or ones based on smaller states with even more unequal resources.

Creating or sustaining modern states is a complex venture requiring great sensitivity and judgment. The British Empire, which created so many, did that rather well, despite the received wisdom that its creations were often a recipe for subsequent mayhem. Rather, those who followed tended not to be very successful in preserving their inheritance.

The British Empire was a composite of many nations, and it left behind many smaller, complex entities. In many cases, the British solutions have stood the test of time and the boundaries of the sovereign states they created are passionately defended by their peoples. However, in an age where the principle of state sovereignty is no longer paramount, the tensions that the British sought to ameliorate are in danger of becoming exacerbated, not least because of an inconsistent expediency.

The Moghul Empire was complex and somewhat “Hapsburg,” but it was only in its early days that it had any true power at all. The Raj had many similarities to the Hapsburg Empire, and while the Hapsburgs were brought down by the First World War, the Raj was finally given the coup de grace by the Second. The British had tried to bring together hundreds of warring, or at least feuding, states of different size and resource, of bewildering ethnic and religious complexity. They made efforts to create a sense of a greater Indian nation by way of centralized Government and a common language, matched with sensitivity to local tradition and custom, reinforced by the political iconography of the time. This could not hold. It soon became clear as the British prepared to depart that old religious enmities would reassert themselves and result in political schism, though large blocks of the Raj remained intact as modern states.

Sierra Leone was a nation whose identity was synonymous with an ideal transcending ethnic affiliation, and many of its people were immigrants with origins in many parts of West Africa. Yet these were transplanted onto a large indigenous local population. The life of Freetown was very different from that up-country, as were the economies of the coast and the hinterland. These tensions did not lead to the eventual break-up of the state along neat ethnic, religious or geographical lines. When they came, the fractures were more fragmented and of a much deeper social kind, between gangs of interest with loyalties only to themselves and their ephemeral warlords. Sierra Leone’s problem was not so much one of threatened secession by a diamond-rich northern province, like oil-rich Biafra from Nigeria in 1967–70, copper-rich Katanga’s from the Congo in the 1960s or again the Niger Delta of Nigeria in 2006, but rather one of the complete disintegration of a state and its peoples who had lost their sense of nationhood.

The fall of the Hapsburgs did not invalidate the idea of some over-arching entity to hold together disparate interests in a viable and peaceful modern state. The creation of Yugoslavia mirrored the logic of the empire from which it was spawned. The Kingdom of the South Slavs had the makings of a successful state with an identity greater than the

ethnic and religious entities within it, who had fought each other so often in history. However, the waning of the sovereignty of the state and the waxing of nationalism and self-determination, encouraged by the international community, was especially evident in Yugoslavia in the 1990s.

These confusions over the relative weight to be given to national sovereignty, over the rights of governments to prevent secession, versus the rights of the international community to promote self-determination and above all Human Rights, have caused difficulties in Iraq. Whatever the legal validity and political justification of the Coalition occupation of Iraq in 2003 voiced at different times, *de facto*, the right to change a regime and re-order a society to give its people the democratic right of self-determination has been asserted and that will be its outcome—but not necessarily of the sort envisaged.

Iraq was another “Hapsburg” creation, by which the British hoped to reconcile ethnic and religious groups in a modern state where all provinces could share in the agricultural and mineral wealth of its districts under a unifying political icon, the Hashemite monarch. No doubt their efforts were clumsy and hasty compared to more measured endeavors elsewhere, but the Ba’athist regime that replaced the Hashemites had no intention of unifying except by means of force, and it had little inclination or concept of how to reconcile interests peacefully.

Whether the factors that enabled that state to survive for so long, not least a sense of over-arching nationhood, still obtain, the arguments against some more fragmented arrangement on ethnic or religious lines are bitterly resisted and still stand a chance of prevailing, albeit a diminishing one now that its people have the chance to express their actual preferences by the ballot-box.

The Coalition faces a dilemma: having intervened and overthrown the sovereign Iraqi government, how is it to assert Human Rights and the right of its people’s self-determination, while at the same time vetoing or thwarting any possible break-up of the “Hapsburg” or “Yugoslav” Iraqi state, when this has been the recent trend elsewhere, supported by the West? If the Croats, the Bosnians and maybe the Kosovars can be independent, why cannot Republika Serbska or the Kurds of Iraq? The answer is likely to be one of political expediency rather than principle, a preference for the old “Hapsburg” frontiers of Iraq set by the British; and yet principle and its unique moral force, is so often summoned up to underpin Western policies.

Political boundaries erode and regenerate over time, and while some nation-states may be voluntarily surrendering their sovereignty in various post-modern arrangements,<sup>211</sup> others are fighting tenaciously to preserve or even create theirs. Even though new groupings of nations with merged sovereignty, like the supra-national empires before them, play an increasing role on the international stage, the nation is likely to be the standard “unit of account” for many years. The challenge today is to create a stable and prosperous international system with nation-states that accommodates the diverse interests of peoples without offending the new mantras of self-determination and Human Rights by which others insist they abide.

Those who seek to build nations may find the British imperial experience to be instructive, given that it was perhaps the greatest nation-building venture in history and has done so much to shape the modern world. The factors and challenges change little, and there is scant evidence that today they are doing much better, especially at a time when the impulse and justification to re-order the world have come to seem so similar to those articulated by those imperialists 100 years ago.

## G. The Future of Nation-Building

Following the Kosovo intervention, in December 1999 the Chinese and Russian governments made clear their grounds for opposing future nation-building ventures, asserting that all members of the international community should enjoy respect for their sovereignty from others without interference in their internal affairs. They criticized “The jeopardizing of the sovereignty of independent states using the concept of “Human Rights are superior to sovereignty” and “humanitarian intervention.””<sup>212</sup>

Yet the US can no more afford to fail in Iraq than could NATO in Kosovo. The difficulties of the Coalition since 2003 have led to a determination to learn lessons, presumably to do better next time. Ironically, it was the failure to learn lessons from nation-building operations since the end of the Cold War that contributed to those difficulties. The strategic lesson might be not to get embroiled in such ventures again. Fatigue, the massive costs, but above all a failure of will might point in a new direction. This conclusion could occur just when armed forces, especially those of the US, were getting to

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211 Cooper (1996).

212 Quoted in Prins (2002), p. 133.



grips with the lessons of those operations and were reconfiguring themselves and training accordingly—a potentially dangerous disconnection in the future between ends and the ways and means.

Whatever the perceived likelihood of such operations in the future, it would be better to be prepared to conduct the full spectrum of operations than to posit and train for but a few. To specialize on those varieties of operation one favors is like preparing for an exam in English literature by reading only those books that amuse, thereby ensuring one is unable to answer crucial questions when sitting the exam. In warfare, the enemy is the examiner and his exam is always unseen. Study and military education seldom hurt, and thinking is a remarkably cheap component of any military capability.

On the face of it, any success in nation-building seems literally an extraordinary achievement. Historical evidence suggests that nation-building is likely to be the more successful the longer the process, but even then may fail. Attacking the roots of local culture too carelessly can be as damaging as any failure to change the fundamentals of the society in question. If cultural factors and good governance are what underpin successful nations, it seems likely that nation-building efforts should be directed primarily at these, for other benefits would follow. At root, nation-building requires the change of culture and that is the hardest to achieve and the most bitterly resisted, yet such change would probably be the motive and condition for any such venture.<sup>213</sup> Success is most likely to occur when a culture is changed so subtly that the people in question feel that their new identity defines them and can believe that somehow it always has.

Creating the strategic conditions that make longevity possible is itself a high accomplishment of nation-building—the measure of strategic and operational art. The shorter the period the more likely it is that the effects achieved will be superficial and the potential “blowback” of the outcomes counter-productive. The effects that can be achieved will also be relative to the receptiveness and sophistication of the culture being shaped by the outsider. Making judgments about who is “developed,” and who is not, offends many Western taboos.

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213 As Peace Corps volunteer Grant Farr noted of his time in Afghanistan in the 1960s, “...it is ethically wrong for one culture to impose its values on another culture...now I realize that giving technical assistance implies changing social values. Simply by being in Afghanistan we are examples of a different culture.” Quoted in Fischer (1998), p. 181.

If people are instructed in the merits of democracy, it is not surprising that they insist on its practice in their own country and vote for those they want, rather than those the bestower of democracy might like. In modern times, “buying democracy off the shelf” without planting deep social and institutional roots can have results that surprise some. Democracy can bring parties to power with a very different outlook from those who instigated the elections from which they benefited, whether they be Hamas, or some religious Shiite party in Iraq, just as it did in many countries in Africa. Robert Mugabe won a free election, monitored by the Commonwealth, but he never favored the idea of multi-party democracy.<sup>214</sup> Democracy may mean that Latin Americans vote for those who hate the US. What might the Chinese vote for if democracy were unleashed too quickly? Would free votes result in a pro-Western governments in Saudi Arabia and much of the Maghreb?<sup>215</sup>

The belief that democracy can be readily implanted can have serious consequences. In July 2003, apparently only 34 out of 1,147 Americans employed in the CPA were Foreign Service officers. One official noted that “Arabists were not welcome because they did not think Iraq could be democratic.”<sup>216</sup> Ideology seemed to have replaced learning and experience.

When democracy is imposed, people are likely be offered a poor choice of ruler. They are prone to choose unwisely and they are likely to lack the broader cultural, social, economic, and political resources to resist those who would overthrow democracy physically or in spirit for what they are wont to describe as their own traditional forms of government. These alternatives are usually in strange congruence with the material advantage of those who advocate and make such changes. To believe otherwise, to believe that all will think and act in the same spirit when confronted with the democratic proposition irrespective of their own personal experience, loyalties, and national stories, would be a metaphysical notion in the face of compelling historical evidence to the contrary.

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214 In January 1980, ZIPRA’s senior political commissar in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe explained to the author that Hitler was a very great man because he had killed so many of his enemies. Mugabe apparently shares this pragmatic admiration, “...let me be a Hitler tenfold. Ten times. That is what we stand for.” Meredith (2005), p. 646. Ironically, Mugabe chose to reject the European multi-party system offered by the departing colonial power in 1980, and instead was in thrall to alternative European ideologies represented by Marx and Hitler.

215 Francis Fukuyama, once the herald of Western triumph, has come to believe that the West’s problems with Muslim countries cannot be solved by transforming them into democracies, the problems have deeper roots. Fukuyama (2006).

216 Quoted in Leonard (2006), p. 27.

The idea that African colonies needed another 30 years of social, economic, and political development, essentially to educate another generation and to build a broader middle-class beneath the narrow elites who would eventually rule and often pillage their own countries, was judged anathema as well as being impractical. The democratic principle, as asserted in The Atlantic Charter and manifested subsequently in “The Wind of Change,” was deemed universal, indivisible and the right of all in all circumstances. It is still generally held to be the case, but positive outcomes may require a more practical approach. It is hard to acknowledge that those British possessions in Africa that gained independence last had the greatest chance of prospering once independent.

Success in a long process is the more likely if the builder has prepared over time with the human and material resources, the psychological resolve, and an understanding of the ways in which these means should best be applied in pursuit of a specified end—an end that will itself shift as both subject and object are changed by the symbiotic process in which they are involved. Not every nation wants or feels comfortable with the changes that may entail.

It seems unlikely that current trends in the world will allow any prolonged intimate nation-building venture. It seems likely that even short ones will entail great expense. It is improbable that in the short time available, a truly profound understanding can be rooted in a body of motivated people to execute the mission with the required cultural expertise and empathy. NGOs and contractors have no institutional advantage in this respect other than that they do not necessarily represent the power of another nation-state.

Coalitions would likely lack the cohesion and thus the staying power to prevail. The UN might have the legitimacy, but on its record would probably end up damaging its reputation and at huge, inefficient cost. It suffers inner ideological contradictions in its very construction and has standards hardly able to match up to the historic examples most of its members deplore.

The days of empire are over, when time, resources, expertise, and people are available to tackle the problem. What purpose or thrill for today’s youth in a foreign service post when they are not even allowed actually to rule the country in which they labor? Celebration of the demise of empires, even relatively benevolent ones by historic standards, is *de rigueur* and is perhaps the only unifying global idea of the last 50 years. Many of the world’s problems are blamed on an imperial legacy that witnessed some of the

most positive political and material advances in history. The most suitable conditions for nation-building are therefore over, and have been followed in many cases by even more morally reprehensible arrangements as peoples have been left to fall behind and suffer in conditions not tolerated in the West, but about which it can do little.

Great power politics, or even rivalries between Islam and the West, are likely to derail any sustained future nation-building ventures. The best hope for principled nation-building may be in small and uncontroversial scenarios where no great international politics are at stake, no great resources, no religious fault lines, no ideologies and where costs are low, but where people feel they want to help and in operations that won't take long. Sierra Leone offers such an opportunity, but it is probably but a part of what for now seems to be a chronic problem with the affairs of much of Africa. Helping to solve short-term problems may be admirable, but is not enough.

If the conditions of the past are lost, can there be analogous models to suit current circumstances? It might be possible to build long-term relationships based on relentless generosity of spirit and material assistance, in which the pride of the nation in question is never dented nor patronized. That would be hard to achieve in what would be a manifestly unequal relationship. Is it possible not to challenge, affront or seek to replace the local culture, at least in a way that demeans self-respect, when at heart that is what nation-building is all about? Cultural exchange programs, military assistance, and favored trade-terms, a new "imperial preference," might be a part of this approach. It is the sort of "remote-control nation-building" befitting an empire of ideas rather than territorial occupation.

No European country is likely to attempt such a thing, although France has had a similar if less altruistic program in its former African colonies. The British Empire was a great development agency acting on Britain's behalf, whereas its development agency today would shrink from the notion of anything so selfish; it exists to alleviate world poverty, which it would no doubt claim was also in Britain's interest.

It may be that the war in Iraq will turn out to be the cultural shock to the new age of principle, analogous to the effect of the Indian Mutiny of 1857. This softened the evangelical fervor and brought in a period of greater cultural tolerance. In the extreme and sad case of sub-Saharan Africa, there seems to be little hope that the fundamentals exist to allow its people to live their lives in conditions comparable to the West without some massive engagement beyond the detached approach suggested above, one which is

probably infeasible. Only where some major interest is at stake, such as the US's in West African oil production, might the will be mustered.

The US's lack of interest in Africa remains a puzzle to the rest of the world. With a large population originating from West Africa and burdens of guilt to balance any material calculus, it might be imagined that Africa's well-being and progress would become a strategic imperative, energetically pursued in American domestic and international politics. African-Americans, who would best be able to lead what might otherwise be seen as neo-colonialism, seem as reluctant to take ownership of such a project as they were to emigrate to Liberia in the early 19th century.<sup>217</sup>

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217 Johnson (1991), p. 313. President Monroe's support for Liberia, whose capital was named after him, was not matched by African-Americans. Few were keen to take up the opportunity to return to Africa, sensing perhaps that whatever their condition in the US, it was preferable to the situation in West Africa. By 1815, there were 250,000 freed slaves in the US but only 17,000 were prepared to go to Liberia.

## VIII. Conclusions

### A. Ends, Ways and Means

Clausewitz urged that “The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish...the kind of war upon which they are embarking.”<sup>218</sup> If a nation is prepared for such a war, or any other undertaking, its leaders will have ensured they have fully understood the nature of the mission, and the tasks it entails. That understanding should enable them to devise the ways, and to marshal the means to deliver success, quite possibly in conditions of ambiguous legitimacy and international controversy. If an understanding of the ends and the appropriate ways and means is lacking, then only metaphysical conviction or a penchant for risk may offer comfort as political leaders press on into danger with their troops ahead of them. Heine’s cynicism may be out of place, but the thrust of his point deserves consideration: “Mark you this, you proud men of action, you are nothing but the unconscious henchmen of intellectuals.”<sup>219</sup>

The elements in likely success will be intellectual, conceptual, and material and the links are complex, requiring coherence across the strategic, operational, and tactical levels. It will matter little that the military may be superbly prepared in its own leadership, concepts, doctrine, structure, equipment, and training for an operation if national political will and the commensurate resources for a prolonged campaign are lacking. Equally, excellence in this will count for little if other Government agencies upon whom success depends cannot perform what is required of them, if only because they do not even see themselves as being required to do so, and are not a party to this military-led way of thinking.

As the matter is about ensuring coherence between ends, ways, and means; so too it is about the relationship between Government, policy, society, the armed forces, and technology. It is unlikely that coherence can be achieved to cope with new permutations of age-old military problems unless these have been anticipated and acted upon through

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218 Clausewitz (1989), p. 88.

219 Heinrich Heine, quoted in Skidelsky (2006), p. 34.

a process of education and learning lessons, rooted in an open-minded culture. Such a culture is typical of the West but can nevertheless be an elusive quality in many military societies, where an excessive sense of hierarchy, deference, and obstinacy are the dominant perversions of the necessary virtues of order, loyalty, and tenacity.

It is clear that where the desired end-state entails nation-building, military action is essentially an enabling function to achieve the conditions of security and stability in which other lines of development can flourish. The joint military and multi-national links must be in place, tied to a vision of some political settlement. In Northern Ireland, security and stability were the preconditions for a political settlement and were in turn enhanced by any progress in reaching one. In Bosnia, the military and political strands bound together. In Kosovo, there was no settlement even though there was relative security and stability, and without it other development was retarded.

In Iraq, there was no articulated end-state for nearly two years, other than the assumption that matters would be well once military victory was secured and “major combat operations” had been completed. Operations since April 2003 turn out to have been the major ones in duration and cost and have yet to be crowned with success. Progress with nation-building has been disappointing largely because security and stability have not been achieved. The report of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction apparently concluded that the failure to deliver the reconstruction required in Iraq, “The Reconstruction Gap,” was caused by failing to understand the scale of the challenge and the security costs, compounded by haphazard planning and shifting priorities. CPA planners envisaged a much more permissive security environment.<sup>220</sup> There has been a disconnection between ill-defined ends, misappreciated ways, and the greatly underestimated means required for the tasks of nation-building, a challenge accurately predicted by many in and outside the chain of command.

## 1. Ends

It helps if ends are supported by a deep, popular conviction of moral purpose, but it is equally useful to have armed forces that, while their members may feel such a purpose, are not dependent upon it. When the going gets tough, circumstances change, and

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220 Glanz (2006).

moral clarity goes AWOL in the fog of war, it is as well to have the services of soldiers who have self-sustaining morale and who will risk all for the unfashionable reasons that form the foundations of successful military societies. These may not reflect the fashion in policy expounded by their political leaders of the day.

Few ordinary men are concerned for principle alone, especially when they pay a price for advancing it; and in a democratic society, it is the view of the ordinary man that counts—as matter of principle. If the West, or at least parts of it, is committed to the advance of “The Age of Principle,” that cause needs to be articulated convincingly, cynical public opinion shaped and galvanized, and material resources readily sacrificed. Sadly, Western electorates are only likely to support the cause if they face obvious perils and penalties if they do not. After the current electoral/policy cycle, will Western peoples and their Governments still have an appetite to change the world, or will they merely defend their immediate interests, not recognizing any binding or practically actionable connection between the two?

There is thus the double paradox. The advance of Western democracy may be hamstrung by the democratic rights of the people who would lead it; and rejected or disabled by those intended to be its recipients and their democratically-elected governments of un-Western demeanor.

Realism does not entirely undermine principle. The theory of the “Just War” that underpins that principle requires that likely success be one of the criteria justifying action. Principle is subject to the pragmatic. The US cannot enter into unlimited commitments and those who refer to the hypocrisy of the West for intervening only when it suits their material self-interest should note that if that self-interest is what makes the operation possible, such selectivity is not only a prudent but also a morally compelling factor.

The US may indeed be embarked upon a centuries-long mission to make “them” like “us,” whether “they” be the Native Americans, the newly arrived at Ellis Island, those encountered by the Peace Corps, or Human Rights abusers around the world. That is not necessarily the same thing as being convinced that nation-building *per se* is a desirable centerpiece of contemporary American foreign policy. Is the US a nation-builder by default or design?

Is the US truly committed to nation-building, or merely to The Long War, hoping that nation-building will not form too large a task along the way? Is nation-building an



irritating collateral operation, or is it the primary method by which The Long War may be won? Is the emphasis given to principle really indicative of some new age, or is it merely a useful means of presenting what is an old-fashioned matter of national interest to a nation wounded on 9/11 and trying to justify the most ordinary and understandable reaction, to fight back, by developing a moral standing to match its degrees of hurt?

Maybe the principle at stake is all the clearer in the light of the menace now revealed. If the US is fighting a war of common utility against those who have attacked it, yet labeling the unwelcome nation-building operations that entails with some loftier motive, is there a danger of disconnection between these potentially rival ends at the strategic level?

## 2. Ways and Means

The achievement of great global objectives is likely to require a wide variety of military activity across the Continuum of Operations. Those who specialize in one variety too much at the expense of another may end up disabling their own efforts.

If the US is embarked upon nation-building merely as an unwelcome adjunct to the GWOT and The Long War, underlying distaste for such operations may conflict with the current emphasis on analyzing and developing new and appropriate concepts and doctrine. Will there be a return to “business as usual” at the earliest opportunity, rather as Linn has described following operations in the Philippines a century ago.<sup>221</sup> Or, will the US military have transformed itself into a magnificent agency for SASO and nation-building just when the likelihood of its conducting major operations of this type recede in the aftermath of experiences in Iraq?

Diverting the focus of the US forces, and even public and private agencies to this nation-building objective might be seen to be a mistake as detrimental as ignoring it in 2000, when US policy reverted to its “comfort zone” of traditional warfighting with the subsequent necessary addition of counter-terrorism. It is such disconnections between policy

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221 American veterans regarded pacification operations as “a thankless sort of task.” Linn (2005), p. 5. The experience of operations in the Philippines was said to have “played havoc” with officers’ tactical judgment and “inculcated erroneous and regrettable ideas.” Linn (2005), p. 7. Few lessons were recorded, let alone learned, although the leaders of the American Expeditionary Force of 1917, veterans of the Philippines, sadly concluded that light infantry and bayonets were well-suited to assaulting German trench lines. “Policy makers must exercise a healthy skepticism of service arrangements based on the ‘lessons of history.’” Linn (2005), p. 9.

formulation and the execution of military operations in its support that leads to dysfunction. Do the military, military strategic and strategic leadership share the same view?<sup>222</sup>

## B. “Down-Loading Democracy”

Some imagine, against all experience, that democracy can be “down-loaded” through some “cultural broadband connection,” or injected “hypodermically” by Krupp, as William Mason put it. This encourages a short-term view of the relationship between action and success, whereas in nation-building, time and systemic change are the keys to that success. The undoubted successes of nation-building in Germany and Japan are unfit comparisons for today’s agenda. Total defeat after years of full-scale war was the precondition for those successes and cannot be repeated in current circumstances.

It is difficult to understand what information justifies the notion that all, whatever their stage of social development and sophistication, are capable of ruling themselves to the standard required of those who propound that very principle. The idea that all who are of equal worth must also be of equal ability looks rather suspect, and is not a proposition anyone is likely to apply in their own daily life. It sounds fine as heroic rhetoric, in for example the Atlantic Charter, but when that is the basis for policy, it can be dangerous. All people can as a fact run their own affairs, but paradoxically it has been the West that has also given itself the right to judge whether that rule has measured up. Maybe all men are indeed deserving of making what they will of their own societies, but it is somewhat impertinent then to complain when the rights of the individual to freedom, prosperity, and happiness are thereby compromised.

Man’s better nature likes to seek out what is common in different cultures, as if this will provide the grounds for good relations, optimistically ignoring the factors that will undermine them. It may be more honest and helpful to identify what is different and cannot be reconciled; and then to work out what can be done to mitigate that difference, rather than to opt for a self-deception that causes dismay later when this is revealed. Some components of other cultures can be construed as coincidental with those of the West, while many simply cannot. Today, there is an inclination to deny certain differences and be hurt when they are revealed, but have qualms about investigating this cause and

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222 Colin Gray has emphasised the importance of matching a nation’s “way of war” with the strategic requirement, and has doubts about current trends in the US. Gray (2006), p. 51.

effect too deeply, wishing to believe that something has gone wrong superficially rather than systemically.

Making little of the differences between cultures also encourages the belief that it is easy to make “them” like “us,” that they are but a whisker away from it in essence, and to draw false conclusions about the sort of regimes that different societies will opt for if, for example, they are given the vote in a democratic election. Appearance and process are confused with deeper currents.

The US has too much at stake to lose, or at any rate to appear to lose in The Long War and the nation-building operations that entails. Even if it doesn’t win as it would wish, the consequences of any setback should be managed to minimize the damage, rather as the British Empire did in the 19th century. Declarations of victory after the application of salutary force were the traditional formula. They served the British purpose, but today may lack credibility let alone acceptability.

An enemy may be emboldened and empowered by any lack of resolve and apparent weakness; and the nation-builder may become disenchanted by the hostility of apparent ingrates. The nation-builder may even derive a certain satisfaction from thinking that the people whose nation they will cease to build probably deserve each other and their right to make a mess of their own affairs. In a previous age this had little consequence, but today, in The Long War, all enemies have the power to reach out for revenge.

## **1. International Support and Legitimacy**

Building international support, grounded in agreed legitimacy, is likely to assist success, but international support cannot be turned on and off at will. Once lost it will be hard to regain. The UN is the most likely source of agreed legitimacy in the eyes of the international community, and despite having lost the moral high ground long ago, its potential value is unique. It remains the prime arbiter of legitimacy in the international community and is often its last and only resort.

## **2. Local Consent**

Success is more likely if nation-building and SASO are with at least the tacit consent of the people, and military operations are successfully focused against those who would

thwart that consent. Success is bound to entail enlisting local support in all respects, minimizing the drain on the nation-builder, and setting the conditions for success on departure.

Educating people who can take over government from the nation-builder is critical, but unlikely to be successful in the short-term. Those people must be rooted in their own societies, people who can count on a local constituency and not be regarded as Quislings. If the people are not changed, failure will likely follow as imposed forms erode away.

An occupier can minimize the appearance of being an occupier by employing local security forces. If such a force can be made effective and loyal, then in a sense the country is not occupied, it is ruled by consent as security is provided by and for the people themselves, albeit underwritten by an external power. This may be an arrangement people in practice consent to, even if they would not say so. It is this indigenous force that will remain when the occupying nation-builders leave. It must be one that the people support, not seek to overthrow once their patrons have abandoned them.

Creating an effective and loyal local force is, however, premised on society's giving tacit consent to it being raised. If society does not consent to being policed by an indigenous force, there will be little prospect of raising a highly-motivated one capable of surviving intimidation and infiltration. Creating the conditions for such political and social consent is an accomplishment in the art of nation-building.

In the absence of consent, occupiers have often brought in other security forces from different ethnic or religious groups, in effect a policy of divide-and-rule. They cannot be counted as indigenous forces, for they are also in a sense occupiers, perhaps resented even more than those who command them.

### 3. Cultural Understanding

Consent is unlikely to be given unless the nation-builder has developed and displays cultural knowledge and understanding. In a global operation, how can that be achieved except after years of effort, some of which may seem to have been wasted? How many officers and civil servants now regret spending quite so much time learning Serbo-Croat in the 1990s? Learning Arabic seems set to become more popular; but can we be sure that Western militaries will spend much time in future nation-building in Arab countries, in a culture that seems to have an allergic reaction to Western interference?

## 4. Timely Departure

If nation-builders leave before a solid foundation has been laid, as the British were so often compelled to do from their empire, then the resources spent on nation-building may well be wasted as that investment is destroyed or not sustained.

## 5. Perceptions and Compromise

Success may also be a matter of subsequent perception, and in many cases it may be wise to accept the best imperfect solution available. This may necessitate negotiation and bitter compromise. There is always another day if The Long War is long enough.

## 6. Domestic Support

The means will entail popular support, but it is difficult for Western democracies to sustain their policies beyond their own electoral cycles, and popular sentiment is driven by very short-term issues. Ideas of Western virtue and its applicability to others may endure across time, but the will and policy to act upon that is inconsistent. Nation-building, as currently attempted in prevailing conditions, seems unlikely to succeed in the time-frame permitted by the whims of the West's own democratic system and culture.

## C. A Fool's Errand?

Is it really likely that the Islamic world can be turned into a region where political and social norms conform to those preferred by the West; or that sub-Saharan Africa can be so transformed? Even if they can be in the long-run, is military intervention and martial nation-building the best way to do it, or merely an obstacle to success? The verdict is not yet in. Whether the West, but the US in particular, will press on with ever more grandiose nation-building projects than that in Iraq is still undecided, but seems rather unlikely. The outcome of operations in Iraq will certainly influence the matter; but any decision should certainly be made in the context, not of any success or failure of recent years, but in a longer historical perspective, in which setbacks and triumphs naturally mingle.

Is nation-building an end in itself, a moral duty, or merely the means to foster national security by reducing threats—a matter of pragmatic self-interest? If it is to be pursued for either reason, are the ways of achieving success understood and even viable in the modern world—do they work? If they could be made to work, are the means avail-

able—not merely the physical and human resources, but the psychological and cultural resources to do what it takes, over however long that might be?

If such a commitment cannot always be made, it may be wiser to opt only for the modest projects where it can be, and to pursue national objectives by more traditional means in struggles of power-politics and the pragmatic trading of interests without reference to any overtly moral motive, compromising principle in a world where others cannot necessarily be “converted,” especially at the point of the bayonet. Whatever cold balance of strategic advantage may be calculated, some operations may nevertheless have a compelling virtue in solving immediate problems. Equally, some actions with deleterious long-term consequences may still be necessary to protect immediate security requirements.

Will today’s nation-building efforts be seen as merely another, or perhaps the last iteration of a 500-year-old process of “European” military and cultural encounter with the rest of the world, undertaken by the US, the last “European” empire left standing? Is this some self-contained mini-drama, or part of a long-running series in which focus on the current episode dims the memory of the earlier ones which brought us to this point? Are we seeing Islam defending its last redoubt before the triumph of the West; or are we at the West’s high-watermark as the Caliphate strikes back and other great powers take shape?

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## Appendix A: Acronyms & Abbreviations

AFRC	Armed Forces Revolutionary Council
BSAP	British South Africa Police
BDA	Burmese Defence Army
CPA	Coalition Provisional Authority
COIN	Counter-Insurgency
ECOMOG	Economic Organization of West African States
GWOT	Global War on Terror
ICS	Indian Civil Service
INA	Indian National Army
IDA	Institute for Defense Analyses
JAWP	Joint Advanced Warfighting Program
JTP	Joint Targeting Board
KFOR	Kosovo Force
KLA	Kosovo Liberation Army
MTA	Military Technical Agreement
NEO	Non-Combatant Evacuation Operation
ORHA	Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SASO	Stability and Support Operations
UN	United Nations
UNAMSIL	United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone



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